



From ‘campus to context’: *a post-course investigation into the implementation of work-based projects in a university-based professional development qualification.*

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ABSTRACT

The Advanced Certificate in Education-School Leadership qualification (ACE-SL) is a post-graduate qualification which focuses on the professional development of the school leader as change agent. This study attempts to broaden the understanding of school improvement inherent in this assumption. It does so through an investigation of influences exerted by external and internal school contexts to constrain or facilitate a school's ability to effect change.

The study employs a realist methodology (which views the social world as comprising both subjective and objective features) and specifically employs on realist evaluative theory to investigate 'mechanisms of change' that were introduced into five primary schools when principals implemented their ACE-SL work-based projects on school discipline in 2009. The study, which was undertaken in 2012, offers an explanation as to how and why interventions were sustained and enhanced in the three-year interim period, or why not.

The findings and a pattern analysis show how important it is to take contextual factors into consideration when trying to understand what triggers change. Successful achievement of an intervention's outcomes cannot be ascribed only to individual leadership competency. Causality needs to be understood in terms of a relation between the contexts of implementation and the generative mechanisms employed. It is this combination that triggers action that leads to change.

Conclusions drawn provide a basis for returning to the ACE-SL as an educational programme to offer some suggestions as to how a school leadership and management programme can take better account of the need for forms of reflective practice that understand that transformational leadership is not about an individual but about dealing with the constraints of context.

Abbreviations and Acronyms

ACE-SL: Advanced Certificate in Education - School Leadership

C: Context

CoC: Code of Conduct

DET: Department of Education and Training

DoE: Department of Education

DBE: Department of Basic Education

HEI: Higher Education Institution

HoD: Head of Department

HSRC: Human Sciences Research Council

M: Mechanism

MSTP: Management of Schools Training Programme

O: Outcome

PI: Parental Involvement

SES: Socio-economic status

SC: School Culture

SGB: School Governing Body

SMT: School Management Team

STCS: Save the Children Sweden

WBP: Work-based Project

WCED: Western Cape Education Department

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CHAPTER 1

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Introduction

The Advanced Certificate in Education in School Leadership (ACE-SL) is a South African national professional development qualification for those in school management positions. Its focus is on the applied competency in school leadership and management required by school principals.

The first chapter sets out the rationale for a study which will argue that there can be both a positive and negative relation between the social contexts of a school and the ability of the school to implement, sustain and enhance planned school improvement interventions.

The background to the study is explained in the opening section of the chapter, with particular reference to the centrality of the work-based project as an assessment strategy that generates evidence of the competency of a school leader in bringing about school improvement. Inherent in the design of the ACE-SL there is an implicit assumption that the competency of an individual school leader is the dominant determining factor in successful school improvement. The puzzle that this posed related to the need to take account of specific conditions of implementation that arise from external and internal school contexts. The research question and the terms of the investigations are set out in the second part of the chapter. The chapter concludes with a brief discussion of the organisation of the study.

Background to the study

Aims and Curriculum of the ACE-SL

In 2004, a decade into the new political dispensation in South Africa, a series of publications reported on poor schooling (HSRC, 2004; Taylor, 2006). The high media profile which the reports generated compelled the Department of Education (DoE) to a course of action within a political and education landscape of newly implemented policies and competency-based qualifications. One such avenue of action was the ACE-SL programme. The assumption was

that if the leadership and management component in a school was strengthened then there would be an improvement in learner performance. The Department of Education mandated the higher education institutions (HEIs) to deliver this programme. How this was translated into one particular institution's design provides the background to my study.

The Department of Education's implementation guidelines stated that;

The key focus of the ACE (School Leadership) programme is to facilitate real transformation in schools that is grounded in recognition of the challenges of particular contexts and the values underpinning the South African Constitution. Assessment tasks must yield evidence that the school has changed for the better in ways that reflect a commitment to and practice of transformational leadership (DoE, 2007: viii).

Specific objectives were to be measured in terms of an individual's competency in particular areas. These objectives can be grouped into three main areas of principal-ship competency, as set out in the figure below:

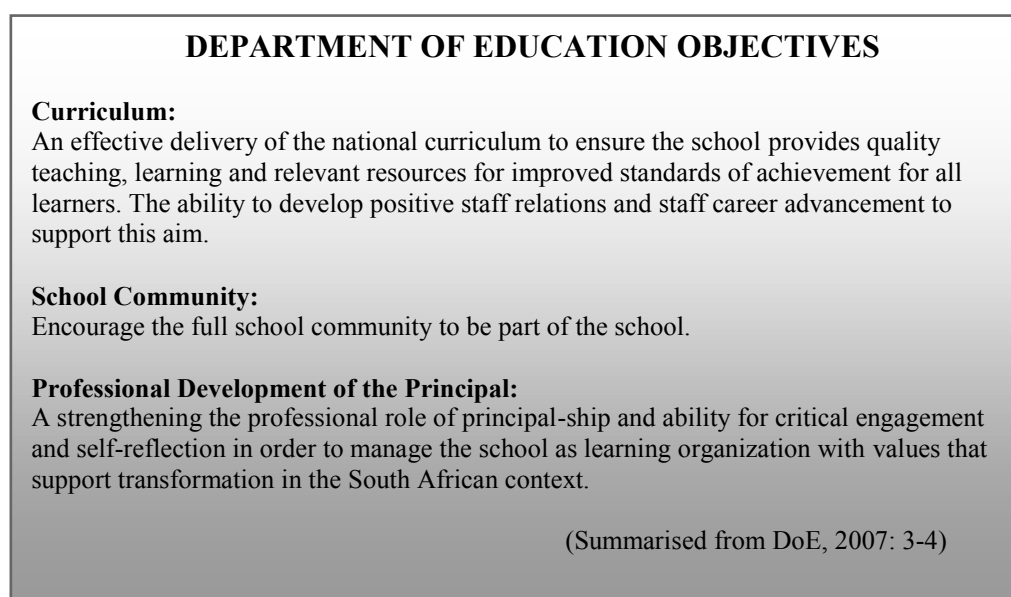


Figure 1.1: The Department of Education objectives

Five HEIs were selected to deliver the first ACE-SL programme in 2007-2009. Within the above parameters the Department of Education granted HEIs creative licence in terms of programme design and the use made of nationally-developed course materials, resulting in different implementation models.

This study investigates one HEI's curriculum response [hereafter referred to as U(i)]. U(i)'s curriculum foregrounded collaboration with stakeholders as the main driver of school improvement and expanded on the Department of Education's objectives, as set out below.

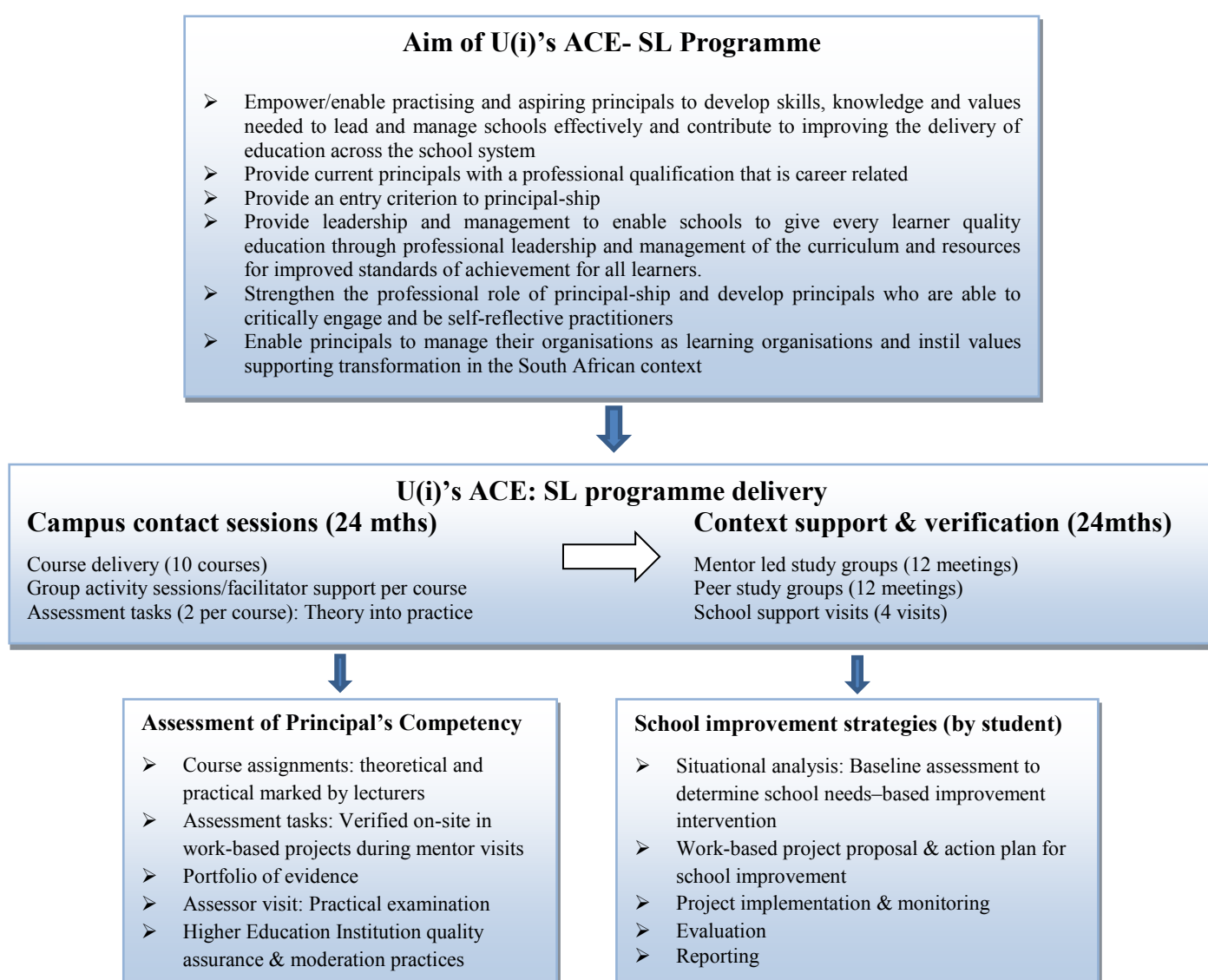


Figure 1.2: U(i)'s response to the national delivery plan for the ACE-SL (Drawn from official documentation but not referenced in order to protect the anonymity of the HEI).

The programme was similar to any other university course, except in terms of an on-site component of mentor support and assessor verification of the school leader's individual competency through evidence of the implementation of work-based projects (Appendix 1).

This represented U(i)'s attempt to bridge the gap between formal course delivery and the specific school contexts in which school improvement interventions were implemented. It also addressed the Department of Education's expectation of school leadership development through a process of reflection and guidance from an experienced mentor. The underlying assumption was that a practical application of programme content with accompanying support would result in school improvement.

Centrality of the work-based project as a school improvement mechanism

School leaders (as students) did not design their work-based projects based only on an understanding of the improvement needs of their schools. They were also encouraged to draw on ACE-SL programme content and materials to help them to plan their interventions.

As this study focuses on *school discipline* as a common topic that emerged from the situational needs analysis which every student undertook as part of the ACE-SL programme, I briefly set out the recommended resources for planning of interventions on the improvement of school discipline:

- A positive discipline plan with a values-driven approach to school discipline (STCS/MSTP, 2007). The plan proposes seven specific steps that cover stakeholder buy-in, a situational analysis, planning, implementation, monitoring, reporting and reflection (Appendix 2).
- The Department of Education's prescribed regulatory Learner Code of Conduct (DBE, 2008; Appendix 3).

The expectation of a requirement to plan, lead and manage a school improvement intervention, recorded as a work-based project, was that it would generate evidence of competency and form a key component of the principal's portfolio of evidence. This formal assessment of competence in relation to the stated course outcomes and assessment criteria of each course was the exit requirement of the programme.

Rationale for the Study

Up to this point I have explained the trajectory of the ACE-SL programme without mentioning that I have been in the employment of U(i) since 2007 when the first programme was implemented. My role is to manage the delivery of the qualification. This position placed me in direct contact with the programme content, students and schools over the period 2007-2012 (the time period to which the study relates). It also allowed me access to a series of research and evaluation reports, initiated by the national Department of Education to assess the impact of the ACE-SL programmes offered by the various HEIs

The first report was the result of an investigation that ran parallel to the first period of ACE-SL implementation of 2007-2009. The research found that, contrary to the intended aim of schools changing for the better as a result of transformational leadership practices fostered through participation in an ACE-SL programme (discussed in a previous section), students focussed on individual attainment as opposed to development or school improvement.

Candidates focussed on completing their assignments rather than focussed on applying their learning to school management practice (DBE¹, 2009: 198).

A second report on the influence of the programme on sixteen schools was undertaken towards the end of the first two-year programme (2007-2009). Whilst the report stated that ‘to a considerable extent the ACE-SL has a positive influence on participating schools’ it went on to acknowledge it was difficult to attribute good practices directly to the influence of the programme (DBE, 2009: 3).

A third impact study analysed the 2006-2010 matric test results of ACE-SL leaders’ schools and compared them with provincial National Senior Certificate results. There were however shortcomings in this report. Firstly, the research focus on matric results did not take into account its relevance to the primary schools (which made up in the case of U(i) the majority of the ACE-SL schools). Secondly, the finding that there was no ‘straightforward relationship between the ACE programme and improved learning outcomes’ was not unexpected given the many variables that exert an influence on learner performance. What was significant was

¹ The Department of Basic Education (DBE) oversees primary and high school education (Grade R-12) in South Africa. It was created in 2009 after the election of President Jacob Zuma, when the former Department of Education (DOE) was divided into DBE and Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET). Reference made to DoE and then to DBE in 2009 and thereafter reflect that change.

the finding that the schools did not have the ability to sustain improvement initiatives due to the contextual challenges they faced. Here the school leader's participation in the ACE-SL programme 'had not been able to overcome such contextual difficulties' (DBE, 2011: xiv).

Whilst it was of course understandable that school leaders would turn into typical students when they attended a university-based programme, findings of the first report implicitly (and perhaps unintentionally) called into question the logic of the ACE-SL as a transformation mechanism.

The findings of the other two reports were inconclusive, in the sense that they explained what inferences could not be drawn, rather than providing positive evidence that the certification of individual competence leads to practices of transformational leadership that facilitate 'real transformation in schools' and recognises the 'challenges of particular contexts' (DoE, 2007: viii), as was intended when the ACE-SL programme was introduced. The reports tried to show a direct link from the ACE-SL programme to the school but did not succeed.

I therefore sought to shift the focus from that of looking at individual attainment and a principal's ability to drive the work-based project, to looking at the social structure of the school context and its impact, positive or negative, on implementation initiatives.

Research Question

Within the context of a national professional development qualification, the puzzle for me was whether an improvement intervention, implemented as a work-based project has any 'life' after the school leader exited from the programme. What does the assessment of individual competence certify in terms of enduring practices that transform schools?

These reflections gave rise to my research question:

What in the social context of a school sustains and enhances improvement interventions, once these interventions have been implemented through the mechanism of a work-based project?

To investigate this fully, five sub-questions are employed:

1. *What external contexts describe a school?*

2. *What internal school culture characterises a school?*
3. *Are the project interventions implemented in 2009 still in place? What does the school leader claim and what is verified by stakeholder response?*
4. *Is there evidence of further school improvement developments and what verification?*
5. *Do observed school routines and practices support claims of sustained and improved practice?*

Conceptual Framework

The research question is related to relevant bodies of literature through an exploration of various aspects of the relation between the structure and agency of the school and possibilities for change. The first part of the review focuses on broader social structures that position schools in particular ways. The second part of the review focuses on the idea of ‘agency’ through a discussion of literature on the school leader as change agent. The literature indicates a tension between external and internal school relations and underlying structural patterns that simultaneously pose constraints and contain change potentiality of great power.

Research Approach

The research adopts a multiple case study approach to explain why interventions were sustained or why not. The research sample consists of five schools whose principals completed the ACE-SL qualification on submission of a management portfolio. The portfolio contained verified evidence of the successful implementation of work-based projects. Using this as the starting point, the study explores subsequent impact and enhancement.

The analytical framework employed to record and analyse the data is drawn from evaluation research theory and specifically from the work of Pawson & Tilley (1997).

Organisation of the Study

The study is presented in five chapters.

- This chapter, chapter 1, sets out the background and rationale for the research questions which drives the study as a whole.

- Chapter 2 offers a selective review of sociological literature on the role of context in relation to improving schools, followed by a discussion of literature on school leadership and school improvement.
- Chapter 3 puts forward the research design and the analytical framework used to collect and analyse the data.
- Chapter 4 is the empirical heart of the study where I present a case study of five primary schools each of which had principals who were 2009 graduates of the ACE-SL programme and whose work-based project reports had indicated a measure of success. I detail the findings of each study to offer insight into what sustained or enhanced improvement strategies.
- In Chapter 5 I discuss the implications of these findings to offer a tentative explanation into what sustains and enhances implementation strategies for improvement in a school context.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

As discussed in the previous chapter the key focus of the ACE-SL programme is to facilitate transformation in schools and my research study aims to place the school within its social context(s) in order to investigate their impact on a school improvement intervention. In this chapter, I explore arguments in the literature on various aspects of the relation between the structure and agency of the school and possibilities for change. The first part of the review therefore focuses on broader social structures that position schools in particular ways. I look at the external context of the school in terms of its positioning in socio-economic and community contexts. Thereafter I look at the internal contexts of the school to build a vocabulary for investigating various dimensions of internal school culture. The second part of the review focuses on the idea of ‘agency’ through a discussion of literature on the school leader as change agent, particularly the relation between instructional and transformational leadership and the agency of the individual school leader.

The chapter concludes with a summary of key concepts taken from the literature to inform the design of the study and to assist the analysis and interpretation offered in the concluding chapters.

The School as Social Context

Schools, like other organisations are frequently described by their ‘spirit’, ‘ethos’, or ‘climate’. This is an attempt to sum up an impression not of particular aspects, but of the total pattern of life, culture, within it. The building and equipment of schools may be identical, but their cultures differ, being the result of traditions by successive intakes of individuals, interacting with one another under the influence of patterns already established (Shipman, 1975: 25).

In order to understand how social contexts influence what Shipman (1975: 25) calls the ‘total pattern of life’ of a school we need to draw a distinction between external and internal dimensions of the social context of the school.

The External Context of the School

The relationship between socio-economic status (SES) and academic attainment

External socio-economic and community contexts are often taken to define the educational trajectories of young people. There is a large body of sociological research which investigates the relationship between education and social inequality concludes that education tends to affirm existing social inequalities far more than it manages to change inequality.

One of the most significant if controversial studies to support the claim that the socio-economic background exerts an effect on learner achievement was the Coleman Report on *Equality of Educational Opportunity* (1996) which was commissioned to investigate why pupils from public schools located in low socio-economic areas in the United States performed poorly in school achievement tests. One of the major findings was that material resources provided in schools made little difference to educational performance. Social family background was the decisive influence.

Schools bring little influence to bear on a child's achievement that is independent of his [or her] background and general social context...the inequalities imposed on children by their home, neighbourhood and peer environment are carried along to become the inequalities with which they confront adult life at the end of school (Coleman *et al.*, 1966:325; as cited in Giddens, 1993: 433 and also in Christie *et al*, 2007: 17).

The report mitigates this finding somewhat in a further conclusion that disadvantaged students benefit most from improvements in school quality. As Christie (2007) concludes after an extensive discussion of the Coleman Report:

it nonetheless remains that the major findings of the Coleman Report – that schools do not overcome unequal backgrounds, but do have greater effects on those who most need them, and that teachers make the greatest difference of all “in-school” factors – have not been substantially disproven (Christie, 2007: 20).

Raudenbush (2009: 172), also writing from a US perspective but many years later, re-affirms the more positive aspects of the Coleman findings when he argues that children from low socio-economic settings tend to gain more from school than do children from high socio-economic backgrounds.

Findings about the relation between the external context and school performance reported in the South African literature tend to confirm the main findings of the Coleman Report. In a

study of the Northern Cape, Crouch and Mabogoane (2001: 64) found, for instance, that children from poor home backgrounds or schools in poverty-stricken areas tend to perform much worse than others; and, that the mere fact that a school is in a township or was an ex-DET schools tend to decrease matriculation pass rates significantly.

In South Africa the relation between poverty and schooling is formally recognised by use of the term 'quintile'. Public ordinary schools are categorised into five groups, called quintiles, largely for the purposes of financial allocation with 1 the 'poorest' quintile and 5 the 'least poor'. These poverty rankings are determined nationally according to the community around the school and infrastructural factors. Quintiles 1-3 are no-fee schools and quintiles 4-5 are fee-paying schools (WCED, 2013: 1).

A report on some of the main findings from a large research project undertaken by the Social Policy Research Group in the Department of Economics at Stellenbosch University, similarly considers how the low quality of tuition offered in schools in poor communities can entrench exclusion and marginalisation (Van der Berg *et al*, 2011).

Our research shows that by the age of eight there are already very large gaps in the performance of school children in the top 20% of the population (top quintile) versus those in the bottom 80% (bottom four quintiles). In other words, by an early age there are already stark distinctions between the prospects of children from poorer communities and those from more affluent communities.

According to our research, the education system generally produces outcomes that reinforce current patterns of poverty and privilege instead of challenging them. Unsurprisingly, we find that the inequalities in schooling outcomes manifest via labour market outcomes, perpetuating current patterns of income inequality (Van der Berg *et al*, 2011: 3).

In his opening comment to a discussion of the SACMEQ 111 (Southern and East African Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality) primary school education survey, conducted in 2007, which tested the academic ability of a representative sample of Grade 6 students in reading and maths, Spaull (2011) specifically addresses the racial dimension of poverty in South Africa.

Given the racial dimension of poverty, and that the poor are more likely to be black, one can go further and say that on average, black students receive an inferior quality of education to their white peers. That this is the reality 17 years on from apartheid is particularly disconcerting (Spaull, 2011: 3).

Not surprisingly, the study shows that students from the uppermost quintile of SES far out-perform students from the lower four quintiles. Despite these disconcerting findings, the study identifies a number of factors that could bring about an improvement and sets these out for policy attention.

From an Australian vantage point, Buckingham, Wheldall and Beaman-Wheldall (2013) similarly seek to prevent an overly pessimistic view on the relation between socio-economic status and literacy achievement. In an extensive review of the relevant literature they discuss a series of factors that explain to some extent the relationship between students' socioeconomic background and their literacy achievement at school and then go on to argue that 'evidence is accumulating that a student's achievement is predicted not just by their own SES but additionally, and more powerfully, by the average SES of their school' (2013: 192). Buckingham *et al* identify three main factors considered in the research literature, namely: material resources, structural characteristics and school practices. 'Material resources include funding to schools, the school's physical environment and educational resources such as technology. Structural characteristics include class sizes and academic streaming. School practices include teachers' expectations of students' ability and achievement levels, rigour of the curriculum, disciplinary climate and homework requirements' (2013: 201).

Taken as a whole, the literature discussed in this section ascribes a strong determining educational influence to socio-economic status (SES) while at the same time signalling that schools can make a difference, especially for students from backgrounds of educational under-privilege.

School-community relations

The literature on school-community partnerships broadly fits under the general heading of school improvement in that it mostly advocates home-school partnerships and parental involvement in the school as positive features of healthy schools (Sanders, 2001: 20). Parental involvement with the school is viewed by many authorities as instrumental in improving childrens' access, attention and retention as well enhance academic achievement (Luxomo & Motala, 2012 :135).

Traditionally families and schools have been viewed as the institutions with the greatest effect on the development of children but communities' role in socialising and educating

young people is seen as increasingly important to success through co-operative action and support. Within the literature these school-community partnerships can be defined as the connections forged between schools and parents, community individuals, organisations and businesses that promote learners' development. They pertain to the social interactions that occur within or beyond local boundaries that are generally reported as beneficial for the parties involved; the children, schools, neighbourhoods, parents and broader society. The demands of changing family demographics, the workplace and the growing diversity among students are some of the reasons given for the problems of educational achievement and academic success that demand resources beyond the scope of the school and most families (Sanders, 2001: 20).

In addressing the role of partnership, Swap (1993) provides a comprehensive summary of the literature that links the specific benefits of home-school partnerships to increased levels of achievement, better attendance and a reduction in behavioural problems. Despite such strong positive evidence, parental involvement is paradoxically minimal and therefore presents an on-going challenge to most schools. Barriers to success include the ever-changing demographics of families that inhibit the development of a school culture as well as the availability of relevant resources, skills and information that would support and maintain that relationship. Swap puts forward a conceptual framework to address these concerns which consists of four models; a protection model for the school from the parents, a parental support model in alignment with the school objectives, a curriculum extension model that incorporates families' skills, and a partnership model founded on an alliance between staff and parents. The choice of model is determined by the values that make up the parent-school collective in conjunction with the requirements of the children and is therefore context specific.

Another literature review by Henderson and Berla (1994) that examines sixty-six studies on parental involvement with the school confirm the link of a parental component to school improvement.

The evidence is beyond dispute, when schools work together with families to support learning children tend to succeed not just in school but in life (Henderson & Berla, 1994: 1)

The evidence appears irrefutable and calls for schools to find the ways and means to engage with families and communities. Listing the well documented problems of student

achievement, motivation, attitude, behaviour and lack of future planning vision, Epstein and Sheldon (2006: 117) suggest this indicates we require ‘new ways’ of thinking about practices that synchronize the demands of the school and the home that is relative to that context.

These studies signal a case for schools to find ways to motivate for, include and importantly retain parental interest in improvement interventions.

I now explore what exists within the school that can make a difference.

The Internal Context of the School

School culture as a regulative or disciplinary culture

Literature on the internal culture of the school focuses strongly on communal values and communal activity, rich in ritual and symbolism so that ‘much of the everyday work of the school is concerned with holding up identification with it and with the values for which it stands’(Shipman, 1975: 36).

Bernstein, Elvin and Peters (1966: 429-430,436) offer a finer distinction when they argue that the school transmits two cultures: an instrumental culture consisting of activities that develop skills, and an expressive culture that centres on a collective cohesion of values. The latter is the major mechanism of social consensus and is made up of the social dispositions of attitudes and values, rules of conduct and principles of social order that exist amongst the school stakeholders. A means of its transmission is ritualization.

Ritual in humans generally refers to a relatively rigid pattern of acts specific to a situation which constructs a framework of meaning over and beyond the specific situational meanings. Here, the symbolic function of ritual is to relate the individual through ritualistic acts to a social order, to heighten respect for that order, to revivify that order within the individual and, in particular, to deepen acceptance of the procedures used to maintain continuity, order and boundary and which control ambivalence towards the social order (Bernstein, Elvin & Peters, 1966: 429).

They further distinguish between two main groups of rituals. *Consensual rituals* function to;

.....bind together all members of the school, staff and pupils as a moral community. They assist in the integration of the various goals of the school, within a coherent set of shared values, so that the values of the school can become internalised and experienced as a unity (Bernstein *et al*, 1966: 429).

Differentiating rituals perform a different set of social functions in the school.

These are concerned to mark off groups within the school from each other, usually in terms of age, sex, age relation or social function. The differentiating rituals deepen local attachment behaviour to, and detachment behaviour from, specific groups; they also deepen respect behaviour to those in various positions of authority, and create order in time.

(Bernstein *et al*: 1966: 430).

The sociological argument here is different from arguments in favour of parental involvement and a strengthening of the school-community relation, as discussed in the previous section.

In this the school is a distinctive community that is related to, but different from home and the local community. Bernstein *et al* hold the sharpening of boundaries between home community and school community to be an important function of ritual so that the ‘child in the home’ becomes a ‘pupil in the school’ who accepts er/his place in a wider referent group.

Gamble and Hoadley (in Ivanson, Davies & Fitz, 2011: 158-160) discuss this shift in terms attributed to Durkheim, where ritual the moral order of the school effects a separation between home and school that creates the possibility of a more impersonal and abstract social world. They show how Bernstein continues Durkheim’s theorisation of the moral order of the school as a force that has the potential to *interrupt* social reproduction.

Irrespective of the family, the school is an independent force in the pupil’s definition of his role. What the school does, its rituals, its ceremonies, its authority relations, its stratification, its procedures for learning, its incentives, rewards and punishments, its very image of conduct, character and manner, can modify or change the pupil’s role as this has been shaped initially by the family (Bernstein, 1975: 48-49; cited in Gamble & Hoadley, 2011: 159).

In this literature the internal culture of the school is thus viewed as containing the potential to ‘make a difference’, though binding the school as a moral community.

School culture as internal accountability

But, the norms and values of a school also fulfil other social functions. Elmore (2008) relates the culture of a school to its sense of internal accountability in terms of its instructional practices. He refers to internal accountability as the ‘degree of coherence in the organisation around norms, values, expectations and processes for getting work done’ and continues that ‘... we speak of organisations with high internal accountability as those with high agreement

around values and an organisational scheme that makes that agreement evident in practice ’ (Elmore, 2008: 43).

To achieve real success, accountability has to be made explicit and belong to the system as a whole. Elmore sees this as a collective, not an individual effort, where an accountability system has to produce a public accountability in its performance.

In order for an accountability system to produce performance as a public good it has to be accompanied by a system of social relationships that take knowledge out of the private domain to make it public – within classrooms in schools, among schools and among a system of schools within a larger polity (Elmore, 2008: 60).

Raudenbush (2009) takes a similar position when he reviews educational research in the United States which suggests that more and better schooling can reduce social and racial inequality and draws a strong distinction between two forms of instructional practice: *privatised idiosyncratic practice* that is rarely open to public inspection and *shared systematic practice*, with shared aims, shared assessment tools, shared instructional strategies, active collaboration, routine public inspection of practice and accountability to peers (2009: 172).

I will argue that the most powerful reforms are conceptualised from the bottom up: One begins with a vision of a community of practitioners dedicated to the success of their students and determined to relentlessly appraise and reappraise their practice to ensure that every student stays on track for success (2008: 172).

In this set of arguments educational practice is depersonalised. Visible evidence of school practice is what is deemed crucial for improvement rather than focusing on ‘attributes’ of individuals. The next section examines more closely the relation between the idea of the school leader as an individual agent of change and the idea of leaders as a more broadly distributed capacity.

The School Leader as an Agent of Change

School leadership is a contentious issue. It does not necessarily refer to an individual leader, although it may do so. In order to understand what is meant by the school leader as an agent of change, there has to be some understanding of the types of leadership that exist in schools. Yukl (2002: 7) in a study examining different types of leadership found there to be a complexity in practice. This is due to the different aspects of leadership that co-exist in

different combinations, for different reasons, in a school, and it is rare for any one type of approach to capture the reality of a particular setting.

For the purposes of this study I chose to examine the types of leadership that were considered to be most prevalent in a school. Hallinger (2003: 329-230) cites instructional leadership and transformational leadership as the foremost types and uses the number of empirical studies as the measure. However he also indicates this is because they focus explicitly on the manner in which improvement is brought about in a school setting. The former type primarily sees leadership to be vested in the individual and the latter through collective agency; the idea of leadership as a more broadly distributed capacity. Other types of leadership do exist, but not to the same extent.

Instructional leadership centres on the principal of a school as the driving force in ensuring curriculum delivery. Long considered as more necessary for schools at the lower end of the performance spectrum, it accommodates a developmental trajectory of increasing autonomy as regularities are established (: 329,331-332; Hopkins, Harris, Stoll & Mackay 2010: 15; Raudenbush, 2009: 169).

But this type of individual agency, Fullan (2006: 7) contends, is a flawed driver. The expectation that an individual will transform schools into continuous improvement he insists is not possible because it relies on the leader's ability to change the system. This cannot be guaranteed or sustained due to a lack of surety of how leadership unfolds in what are very differing school contexts.

Sustainability, one could argue, is to be found in successful schools and successful schools, according to Day (2005: 581) are successfully led. He cites authorities to substantiate his opinion of the school's necessity to be led into becoming a caring, values-focussed, trustful collaborative community with established cultures and systems. This speaks to leadership with a vision of the future which relates to transformation.

Addressing the notion of transformation may assume opposing the instructional approach as being too autonomous a view of leadership. However, if the stance taken by Hallinger (2003: 329, 338, 345) is accepted, that it is the teachers who are the legitimate instructional leaders in a school and not the principal, then this is where the principal's role shifts. This move from

an instructional to a transformative mode allows for the support and development of staff to improve on their delivery of the curriculum. It allows the principal to become a capacity and culture builder, one who realistically responds to the changing needs of the school context, as well as the broader education scenario.

Rather than focussing specifically on direct coordination, control and supervision of curriculum and instruction, transformational leadership seeks to build the organisation's capacity to select its purposes and support the development of changes to practices of teaching and learning. Transformational leadership may be viewed as distributed in that it focuses on a shared vision and shared commitment to school change (Hallinger, 2003: 331-332).

Hallinger's view of transformational leadership as distributed and future focussed means it has to address the collective that make up the school community as well as acknowledge the importance of collegial decision-making. Here, the workload, responsibilities and issues related to it become shared. There is ample empirical evidence that supports the use of this approach as the central force in capacity building at every level of the school (Gamble & Kühne, 2010; Jacklin et al, 2010; Elmore, 2008; Shulman & Shulman, 2004; Spillane in Hargreaves & Fullan, 2009, Supovitz, Sirinides & May, 2010).

Jacobson gives us a good example of this approach in the remarkable turnaround of a failing, high-poverty urban school. This coincided with the arrival of an exemplary principal which was a factor but more significant was the distributed leadership design he put in place. The practical implementation of the design was credited with the growth of a culture of professional development and collaborative learning that ensued and ensured the school's continued improvement. An implicit reminder here, is that whilst it was distributed leadership that provided the necessary sustaining and enhancing factors, it was overseen by the accountable authority for school improvement, the principal (2001: 41).

What seems apparent is that both types of leadership have to be present in order for a school to improve. According to Bass (1999: 9), if the task for the principal is to inspire, intellectually stimulate and engage the school community to commit to the interests of the organisation's future, then the leadership has to be both directive and participative and this requires moral development. This view argues for the suitability, effectiveness and interdependence of both an instructional and transformative approach (Leithwood, Patten & Jantzi, 2010: 698).

Hopkins, Harris, Stoll and MacKay (2010: 7,20) in their review of school and system improvement support this complimentary notion of leadership. They state it is the knowledge of how instructional and transformational leadership interact with each other that must be understood in order for real transformation to take place. The applicability of each leadership approach may vary in response to the event, the situation and the participants. Its validity then becomes dependent on the overlapping considerations of the school and its external environment.

Leithwood and Janzi (1999: 112, 471) comment that most school initiatives assume significant capacity development on the part of individuals, groups and the whole organisation and that relies on high levels of motivation and commitment to solving implementation concerns. What they suggest is we move beyond polarised concepts of leadership to look at the far more complex set of interactions that exist between leadership, school conditions and the family educational culture to addressing the issues that hamper school improvement.

Summary

The literature indicates that the impact of external and internal contexts is a critical factor to school improvement. Their inter- and intra-relationships are complex with both containing the constraints of embedded and sometimes invisible structural patterns, as well as containing change potentiality of great power. It is this tension that I will try to capture in the design and analysis of the study that follow in the next chapters.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN

Introduction

In the first part of the chapter I introduce the research context and the sample selection of schools.

In the second part of the chapter I briefly discuss the main analytical concepts on which I drew to help me to design and organise the empirical part of the study and to analyse and interpret key findings. As this study is particularly interested in the influence that ‘context’ has on the capacity of a school improvement intervention to sustain itself over time, I position it broadly within a realist methodology which views the social world as comprising both subjective and objective features. I look specifically to the work on realist evaluation as an appropriate resource for helping to find concepts and a vocabulary to enable me to present my investigation in a systematic and theorised manner.

The chapter concludes with a discussion on various aspects of the research design, ethical considerations and the limitations of the study.

Research Design

Locating the study

The case to be examined in this study focuses school improvement, by examining how internal and external contexts impact on a school’s ability to sustain an improvement intervention. The intervention to be studied is one initiated by the school’s principal, as part of a professional development qualification in leadership and management offered by a higher education institution.

As a programme requirement each student had to complete two work-based projects which involved the design and implementation of a school improvement intervention. This intervention was formally assessed and presented a key component of the portfolio of evidence that determined the students’ competence. The post-intervention study on which this dissertation reports, took place three years after the work-based projects were assessed as successful in implementation.

The post-intervention study focuses on the work-based project on discipline.

For the project on school discipline the higher education institution supplied two key resources to the principal: a booklet on *Positive Discipline in your School* (STCS/MSTP) which foregrounded norms and values, as well as the collective involvement of everyone in the school community; and, an *Example of a Learner Code of Conduct* (DBE) as prescribed by the national Department of Basic Education.

Implicit in these course offerings was that a values-driven disciplinary system and a rules-based disciplinary system should be in operation in the school context.

Case Study as a Research Approach

Case study is an approach which is often employed in evaluative research. Rule and John define a case study as a ‘systematic and in-depth investigation of *a particular instance in its context*, in order to generate knowledge’ (2011: 4; original emphasis). Rule and John further distinguish between ‘intrinsic’ and ‘instrumental’ case studies. In an intrinsic case study, the case itself is of interest as a unique or innovative situation. The case is worth examining in its own right rather than serving as an example of a broader issue. An instrumental case study takes a particular issue as its focus and then selects cases that allow this issue to be studied in depth (2011: 9).

Perhaps because of the popularity of a case study approach in qualitative social science research, Merriam (in Henning, Van Rensburg & Smit 2004: 41) warns that case studies can often be a ‘catch-all category’ for any type of research that is not a survey or an experiment. Brown and Dowling issue another type of warning when they argue that there is ‘no such thing as ‘the case study approach’ and that the use of the term ‘case’ is best interpreted as simply a way of establishing the theoretical and empirical bases of a study (1998: 31; 167).

It is therefore important that I describe my approach more precisely, as a *multiple-explanatory case design*². It was an explanatory approach because I did not only want to describe what happened in a select number of schools in the three years since their principals implemented their work-based projects on school discipline, I also wanted to try to explain

² Yin (2003) distinguishes between descriptive, exploratory and explanatory case studies.

why the intervention had been sustained or why not. For this reason the case design needed to be driven by a theoretically-informed analytical framework with explanatory capacity.

I needed to select more than one case in order to be able to conduct a comparison across cases, within the common theoretical framework afforded by the literature on realistic evaluative research. In that sense my selection of cases is *instrumental* rather than intrinsic.

Research Sample

The first step in this process was to select a sample that would stand up to comparative analysis.

Five graduates from the 2007 ACE–SL national field study intake of students were selected for this study. The rationale was that they:

- entered the programme as primary school principals ³(from two adjoining districts in the Cape Town Metropole)
- covered the same academic course content, delivery and assessment
- were members of the same peer study group, due to a school proximity
- sought to improve school discipline in their particular context as one of their two designated work-based projects
- utilised the suggested positive discipline plan to design and implement the projects
- put into formal operation the provisions as set out in the Code of Conduct for schools
- were given peer group and individual support from the same mentor
- had work-based projects that were assessed as achieving a measure of success in their schools
- came from different quintile schools with one upper quintile school (top 20%), three lower quintile (bottom 80%) and one independent (not graded).
- fulfilled the same professional roles and responsibilities as set out by the Department of Basic Education (DBE) and the South African Council for Educators (SACE).

These criteria were intended to equalise their participation in the school leadership programme to some extent and to eliminate or at least minimise selection bias.

³ In Chapter 1 and 2 I refer to school leaders. As the leaders in the sample are all principals henceforth they are referred to as such.

Analytical Framework

In a paper entitled *Causal Explanation, Qualitative Research, and Scientific Inquiry in Education*, Maxwell addresses what he calls the ‘somewhat polarized confrontation between qualitative and quantitative researchers on this issue of causal investigation’ (2004: 8). He argues that, unlike what happens in quantitative research, realist social researchers who do qualitative research pay considerable attention to the context-dependant nature of causal explanation (: 6). At the same time, they view the meanings, beliefs, values and intentions held by participants as essential parts of the causal mechanisms operating in particular settings (: 7).

Pawson and Tilley (1997) describe the key feature of a realist approach as ‘its stress on the mechanics of explanation’ of social regularities, patterns, or outcomes (: 55). They argue that such explanations need to show how the ‘interplay of structure and agency’ (: 71) brings this regularity into being. Put in simpler language, they argue that ‘interventions are embedded in social systems and how they work is shaped by this context’ (Pawson, Greenhalgh, Harvey & Walsh, 2004: iv).

As the basis of argument, the explanation must put forward the underlying programme mechanism (M)⁴ which generates the regularity or outcome (O). This involves making explicit the underlying assumptions about how an intervention is supposed to work and then gathering evidence in a systematic way to test and refine this theory (Pawson et al, 2004: iv).

The explanation must also take contextual factors (C) into account.

All social programs wrestle with prevailing contextual conditions. Programs are always introduced *into* pre-existing social contexts ... these prevailing social conditions are of crucial importance when it comes to explaining the successes and failures of social programs (Pawson & Tilley, 1997: 70; original emphasis).

Pawson and Tilley then explain that what they mean by context refers not only to spatial, geographical or institutional locations but also to the social rules, norms, values and social relationships at work in these spaces. A crucial part of any investigation is therefore to investigate the extent to which pre-existing structures enable or disable the intended mechanisms of change (M) (: 70).

⁴ Given the specialised nature of the terminology, I kept to the terms used by each theorist. This means that the terms programme (or program), project and intervention should all be viewed as referring to the same issue. They are thus used interchangeably.

The Pawson and Tilley model is one where the outcomes (O) are understood and investigated by bringing to the centre of the investigation certain hypotheses about the mechanisms (M) through which a project seeks to bring about change for the better, as well as considering the contextual conditions (C) which are most conducive to that change (: 56-57).

The model below explains this relation.

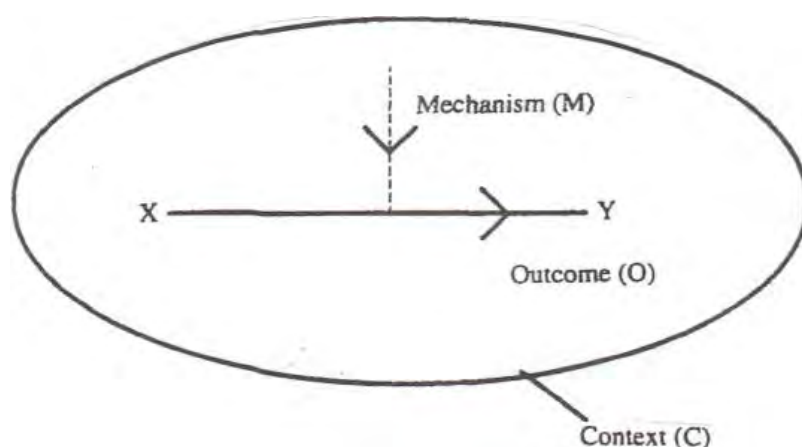


Figure 3.1: The Realist Experimental Design (Pawson & Tilley, 1994: 300)

The pattern configuration $C + M = O$ is thus a ‘proposition stating what it is about a program which works for whom in what circumstances’ (Pawson & Tilley, 1997: 217).

But where do these hypotheses about the mechanisms of change originate? Weiss (1997) argues that all programmes or interventions that want to bring about change already have, within them, a *programme theory of change*.

By theory, I don’t mean anything highbrow or multi-syllabic. I mean the set of beliefs that underlie action. The theory doesn’t have to be uniformly accepted. It doesn’t have to be right. It is a set of hypotheses upon which people build their program plans. It is an explanation of the causal links that tie program inputs to expected program outputs (Weiss, 1997: 55).

She goes on to argue that it is important for a researcher or evaluator to investigate a programme’s explicit or implicit theory of change. While surfacing a programme’s theory of change is by no means the only way of establishing the focus of an investigation, it is ‘a good way to clarify and systematise the factors that are worth examining’ (: 69).

Numerous studies in the schooling field have used the concepts provided by realistic evaluation to assess innovation and change in education (see for instance Taylor-Powell,

Steele & Douglass, 1996; Timmins & Miller, 2007). In the next section I discuss how I employed the analytical framework put forward in this section to set up each of the cases investigated in the empirical part of the study.

Stages of the Investigation

The empirical investigation proceeded in four stages.

- Stage I: Surfacing the *programme theory of change* implicit in the portfolio evidence presented at the end of 2009. For each sample school an ‘if ... then’ statement was developed to make explicit the principal’s assumptions about how the intervention would work.
- Stage II: Sorting the intervention activities described in the portfolio of evidence of each principal into 2 categories: *values-driven* activities and *rule-based* activities. These two concepts derived from the course material would later serve as a basis for comparing different work-based projects in the different schools.
- Stage III: Field work in the form of a two-day school visit to each of the five schools in the sample. (This stage is described in greater detail in the next section.)
- Stage IV: Analysis and interpretation, using the concepts and categories already described earlier in this chapter.

Instrument Design

To ensure internal validity and reliability of the evidence obtained a triangulation of information sources was planned. This is depicted below:

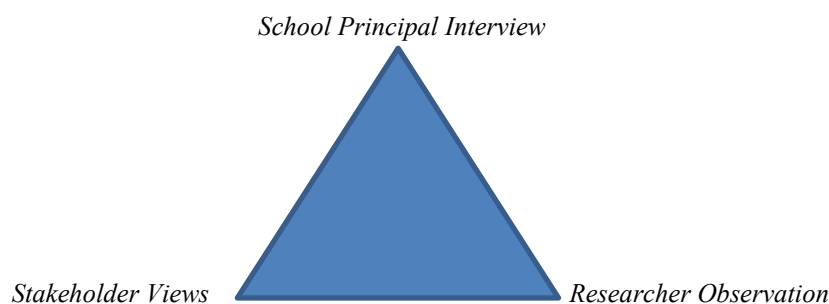


Figure 3.3: Triangulation of data sources

The following instruments were prepared for the school visits:

- Principal interview questionnaire (Appendix 5)
- Teachers' focus group interview questionnaire (Appendix 6)
- Learners' focus group interview questionnaire (Appendix 7)
- Parents' questionnaire: To be completed by respondents in writing (Appendix 8)
- School observation schedule (Appendix 9)

Field Work

During a two day school visit I conducted a series of interviews and observations.

Interview with principal

I presented the principal with a list of the various activities (not sorted into categories) that had been implemented and asked her/him to indicate which if any were still in operation (Appendix 5). I then questioned the extent these activities had been sustained, if there had been unintended consequences, if any new activities had been generated out of the project and if being part of a professional development qualification had contributed to improvement?

Separate focus groups with a selected sample of teachers and learners

The focus groups of teachers and learners (who had been at the school from 2009-2012) were requested to discuss how they felt about discipline at the school and if there had been improvement (Appendices 6 & 7). The groups' feedback was unprompted as to any reference to the principal's implementation strategies.

Letters to parents

A questionnaire was sent out to parents (involved in the school from 2009-2012) via the principal requesting their opinion on discipline at the school and if there had been any improvement (Appendix 8). This delegation to the principal may have allowed for a measure of screening on his/her part.

Researcher Observation

During my two day observation period at each school I observed and recorded the behaviour of the members and groups that made up the particular school community in their daily

routines and practices in the offices, classrooms and public spaces of the school (Appendix 9).

Analysis and Interpretation

I built up each case study in terms of:

- Internal and external contexts (C)
- Mechanisms of change (M): A theory of change and a detailed description of the values-driven and rules-based activities implemented
- Triangulated verification of outcomes (O) by different constituencies:
 - Retrospective views of the principal as change agent
 - Views of teachers, learners and parents as school community
 - Independent researcher verification through observation of daily routines and practices in the school
- Analysis of the change dynamics of the school

This was followed by a comparative analysis across the five schools and conclusions.

Research Ethics and Confidentiality

As the research involves human subjects the study required ethical clearance and submission to the UCT Research Ethics Committee and the Western Cape Education Department. Upon clearance; and prior to interview, consent forms were distributed to the respondents for completion and signature. In the case of learners this was signed by the legal guardian. In the interests of confidentiality the schools were given pseudonyms and the respondents' numerical anonymity.

The schools were named as follows; Tulip Primary, Strelitzia Primary, Daffodil Primary, Rose Primary and Gardenia Primary.

Limitations to the Study

I was aware that my direct involvement in the delivery of the ACE: SL programme as well as the development of materials on work based projects could be judged to compromise the research. As my role and responsibility from 2007-2009 was to manage the programme, this did not involve a direct relationship with the selected group off-campus as either an assessor

or mentor and therefore had no bearing on their management competency or knowledge of the status of their work-based project in the school context.

The researcher voice, however, as a source of knowledge with respect to the ACE-SL programme is evident where it is applicable. The outcomes of the study; be they of a positive or negative nature, are viewed as a benefit to the schools and to the future operation of an institutional design and learning approach therefore it is of no interest on the part of the researcher to affect the research purpose.

CHAPTER 4

FROM CAMPUS TO SCHOOL CONTEXT

Five Case Studies

Introduction

In this chapter five school case studies are presented. In line with the concepts derived from realist evaluative research, each study is driven by a particular context-mechanism-outcome configuration ($C + M = O$). The data is drawn from two sources; the principals' portfolios of 2009 and the school visits in 2012. Each case study is divided into five main sections.

- The introductory section describes and discusses the external and internal school context. The external context is addressed in terms of its socio-economic status (Two schools are in the uppermost quintile which fall under the top 20% in achievement, two schools are in the lower quintiles and one is independent) and community cohesion. The internal context discusses the pre-existing school culture into which the intervention was introduced.
- The second section discusses the theory of change and implementation activities, re-described from the 2009 portfolio of evidence and classified under two categories: *values-driven* and *rule-based*.
- The third section shows the 2012 verification responses by the principal and the unprompted responses of sample groups of teachers, learners and parents.
- Thereafter the researcher's observations during the school visit are noted.
- Each case study concludes with a short analytical discussion.

School 1: Tulip Primary School

CONTEXT (C): Tulip Primary School

Introduction to the school

Tulip Primary School is a co-educational Catholic convent school that has been housed in the same building for over fifty years. As the learner numbers expanded (558 in 2012), pre-fabricated classrooms and a car-park were added to the play areas. The buildings are well maintained and the classrooms well resourced. The school is serviced by a stable staff led by

a female, long-serving, experienced principal who chose to enter the ACE-SL programme to further develop her leadership and management skills.

External context

Socio-economic status

The external context of Tulip Primary School is defined by its location alongside an industrialised area with the blue-collar workforce commuting daily on public transport from the surrounding townships. However it is accorded the status of Quintile 3 which does not appear relevant to this demographic and talks to the necessity for quintile review.

Parental involvement

As the majority of the learners are the children of commuting workers they do not reside in the area of the school. The remainder of the learner body is comprised mainly of refugees and the nearby prison wardens' children. This demographic composition presents an ongoing challenge as serving an 'out-of-area' community restricts the development of an extra-mural or after-care programme. Safety is an on-going concern with many learners travelling home alone because parents are working whilst others have to wait outside the school for collection. Children are legally not allowed to remain on school property without supervision but parents make little use of the adjacent after-care facilities due to financial constraints. For these reasons, parental involvement in the activities of the school tends to be minimal.

Internal school context

The mission statement of Tulip Primary states the school is:

.... committed to upholding the vision of the Catholic Church of a community serving humanity. The values of truth, justice and tolerance are instilled in a loving, caring and sharing atmosphere whilst striving towards academic, cultural and social excellence in every learner.

The mission statement is a 'living document' in the school as the religious ethos is explicitly reflected in the many references and symbols around the school and promoted by the stable, long-serving staff.

1st Teacher: Our parents are aware of what they have here. Our parents are aware. They know. This is why they choose the school.

2nd Teacher: Ja, that's the truth

(Focus group discussion, 18 September 2012)

It is clear that the school has acquired an excellent reputation over time, confirmed by its long waiting list for admission, with catholic children given preference.

MECHANISMS (M): Tulip Primary School

In her 2009 work-based project report the principal conveyed that whilst engaging with the course material and the recommended positive discipline plan, she realised a discipline policy review was necessary. In this the involvement of the school community to enact with the school vision was conditional if there was to be an improvement in school discipline. She motivated that it would only be through the joint partnership of the stakeholder groups that the desired result would be achieved. This formed her theory of change which is recast in the following way.

Aim of the work-based project on discipline in Tulip Primary School:

To change the mind-set of teachers and parents to incorporate the values of a positive discipline approach

If

Teachers and parents understand, embrace and implement the Learner Code of Conduct through a shared learning experience (M)

Then

The learners will be easier to manage and the school will have a more pleasant atmosphere for teaching and learning to take place (O)

Table 4.1: Tulip Primary School Theory of Change

Tulip's theory of change focusses on improving learner behaviour through an implementation of disciplinary practices and policy. The table below indicates the activities and how they were undertaken in the school.

Values-driven Activities	Rules-based Activities
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Development programme to change mind-set in teachers and parents with respect to discipline SMT initiated buy-in with stakeholders through an inspirational session. Followed with review of mission and mission. Staff development programme undertaken. 2. Parental development programme introduced Sharing ways of working with learners. Aim to strengthen home/school partnership. 3. Involvement of stakeholders Involved as much as possible and informed on process and progress. 4. Learners opinions of staff shared Learners responded to question, 'Do you think your 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mission statement linked to the learner Code of Conduct Wording to reflect the positive discipline focus. 2. Reflection session on staff behaviour linked to Learner Code of Conduct Teacher self-assessment of behaviour to be in line with Code of Conduct. 3. Classroom rules on display and learners attention drawn when infringing Five rules per class. Focus on developing learner self-discipline through an understanding of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. Positive wording. 4. Formation of discipline committee

<p>teacher likes you?' Views shared to encourage staff to adopt a more positive approach by being aware of opinion.</p> <p>5. Recidivists receive one-on-one counselling Individuals given support and not highlighted as problem in front of peers.</p> <p>6. Update on progress through weekly newspaper To sustain interest reminders to parents of the school strategies and that support is available to them .</p> <p>7. Good deeds are acknowledged and rewarded at assembly Assembly with focus on values.</p> <p>8. 'Stories for Thinking' learner development programme with focus on positive behaviour Monitored and a progress report presented end of each term.</p> <p>9. Mentoring support given to new staff members by experienced staff On agenda at staff meetings.</p>	<p>Comprised of staff and parents.</p> <p>5. Causes of negative behaviour analysed Addressed collectively and with individual learners.</p> <p>6. Detention Demerit system introduced with detention on accumulation of specific number of demerits.</p> <p>7. Record keeping of merits and demerits shared with parents Teachers keep individual record for discussion with parents on their child's behaviour .</p> <p>8. Discipline monitors introduced Receive learners at entrance to school and line-up to encourage punctuality.</p> <p>9. Consistency on the wearing of school uniform Monitor check at assembly and in classrooms.</p> <p>10. Discipline agenda item for staff meetings Status of project discussed.</p> <p>11. No ball games before school to calm learners Seniors encouraged to converse/discuss current topics. Juniors to play board games/ read library books.</p> <p>12. Punctuality Parents initially opposed but have accepted 07:50 start to the school day. A settling down period (above). Classes begin 08:00.</p> <p>13. Cleaner classrooms and play areas Learners clean own work areas in class. Environment monitors check classes daily with record kept. Class trophy awarded at weekly assembly.</p>
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Table 4.2: Tulip Primary School work-based project activities

Although the theory of change refers to the mind-set of teachers and parents the activities include the learners as participants and not only as recipients of this change. Separating the activities into values-driven and rules-based in the table shows that, while the implementation of the Learner Code of Conduct is the key improvement strategy, the explicit assumption was that values-driven activities should not be neglected.

OUTCOMES (O): Tulip Primary School

Verification in 2012 of the 2009 reported claims

Verification from the principal

In 2012 when handed the list of twenty-two activities (not yet categorised into the values-driven and rules-based activities set out above), the principal had no hesitation in confirming all were still in place, although she considered that the parental component of the development programme required more attention. In referring to unplanned constraining

factors (not listed), she found they referred to the late-coming of learners, peer-on-peer bullying and a lack of parental involvement in the discipline committee. These constraints were not widespread but related to smaller groups. Her aim therefore was to strengthen these relationships through relevant strategies and these were either in planning or in operation.

A final constraining factor was the disinterest of staff approaching retirement. This had been alleviated to an extent in making them responsible for mentoring new and less experienced staff.

For herself, she considered the project management experience she had gained through the implementation of the work-based project, to be her most valuable lesson.

I have learnt to speak to different stakeholders and include them in every step of the process.

(Interview with principal, 11 September 2012)

Verification from the school community

The teachers, learners and parents interviewed had been part of the school community when the project was implemented in 2009. They were simply asked their views on school discipline. No mention was made of the prior verification claims obtained from the principal.

Respondents made specific mention of communication strategies that have been beneficial. These were the sharing learners' opinions of staff, updates on progress in the weekly newspaper, good deeds acknowledged at assembly and stories reinforcing positive behaviours as activities.

The collective involvement of staff, learners and parents was overwhelmingly cited by all groups as having the most impact on improving discipline.

Researcher: What do you think, strongly contributes to a sustained trust?

1st Teacher: I think the calmness.

Researcher: What sustains that calmness? Where does that come from?

2nd Teacher: We all bought into it (the project)

1st Teacher: So obviously when you do; and you actually see the results, then you realise that's working.

Researcher: So you bought into it when you saw it working?

All (chorus): Yes

3rd Teacher: We are teaching children now to speak up. It had to be a shift for me, to go into a different mode of discipline and I learnt it through this school. I have to

make the shift to teach children about behaviour rather than telling them. This is what you have to do. You have to tell them why they are doing it.

(Focus group discussion, 18 September 2012)

This claim is supported in the following learners' reference to the lowering incidence of negative behaviour:

1st Learner: Certain children from a while ago used to do their tricks, but it stopped. Every year it stops a little bit, it stops a little bit, and it gets less and less.

2nd Learner: We have good discipline in our school

Researcher: Do you all agree with that?

All (chorus): Yes

(Focus group discussion, 18 September 2012)

From information offered by stakeholders (including the principal) there was evidence of further improvement in activities put in place that did not form part of the initial project.

Form of Activity	Activity	Principal	Teachers	Learners	Parents
Values-driven	1. Development of learner respect for others	■			
	2. Weekly news article on child 'I am a star'	■			
	3. Ambassadors Grade 7. Learners monitor self & each other	■		■	
	4. Bullying programme introduced and incidence minimised	■	■		
	5. Collective development of a value system with calm ethos		■		■
	6. A development of pride in being part of the school				■
	7. High level of visibility and accessibility of principal to all stakeholders	■			
	8. Reflection incorporated into all meetings	■	■		
	9. Staff awareness as role models				■
	10. Staff model team cohesion				■
	11. New staff co-opted and inducted into project and ethos		■		
Rules-based	1. Collective rules to develop respect	■			
	2. Timetabled regular discipline practices	■	■	■	

Table 4.3: Tulip Primary School activities that emanated from the project

The timetabling of regular discipline practices; such as being at class on time, was referred to by the principal, teachers and learners to be the most significant activity to emanate out of the project as it minimised infringements. The weighting of the activities shifted to be predominately values-driven which demonstrates less of a need to rely on regulative measures. This creates the opportunity to re-focus the lens on values and it is the positive discipline activities that take precedence. The improvement thus far is confirmed by the teachers.

1st Teacher: We don't have problems with fights.

2nd Teacher: Ja that's gone.

Researcher: Do you have any problems with the bullying of learners?

3rd Teacher: It's not as problematic.

Researcher: It's minimised?

All: Yes.

3rd Teacher: We now have a (anti-bullying) campaign at this school.

(Focus group discussion, 18 September 2012)

The positive atmosphere of the school and the improvement in the behaviour of learners has not gone unnoticed as this parent's comment shows.

There has never been a day when I enter the school premises that the learners don't greet me. They are polite, friendly and always have a smile on their faces. I've never felt such a great sense of welcome at any other school before.

(Parent questionnaire, 18 September 2012)

Researcher observation of school routines and practices

The principal was observed to be a visible and available presence in the public areas and playgrounds of the school. When asked about this she said it was her way of actively promoting the school vision statement to the staff and learners. The routines and practices observed were mainly centred on the positive manner in which the principal and staff members engaged with each other and the children.

The teachers demonstrated the professional practices of being present and prepared and their learners were seen to be engaged in their work. These practices appeared to be self-driven, but the principal commented on the necessity of constantly having to monitor these practices

to maintain standards. She cited the example of her current responsibility to develop a particular head of department's (HoD) management practices. This was confirmed in witnessing the HoD's ineffectual management of inattentive teachers at line-up and assembly (The HoD glared at teachers but they ignored her.)

Outside the classroom there was always supervision in the overseeing of the movement of children from one venue to another and in their play areas. The learners appeared to respect the school environment as there was no littering around the tuck-shop area where monitors assisted in keeping queues orderly and their classrooms were tidy.

I did not witness any form of negative discipline practice in the school but habitual late-coming of a percentage of learners is an on-going challenge presented by the school socio-economic status.

DISCUSSION

Tulip Primary showed evidence of sustained and enhanced improvement of its disciplinary culture and practices. Two factors seem pertinent. The first is that the school's existing internal culture promotes the rituals, morals and values of its faith-based educational approach. The religious ethos is explicitly manifested in school practices and the intervention initiated through the work-based project on discipline could thus build on this ethos.

The second is that, even though the intention was to introduce a Learner Code of Conduct and to establish the disciplinary infrastructure to support implementation, the principal's intervention design included a number of values-based activities that reinforced the school's mission statement. Unprompted feedback given by teachers, learners shows the value of this strategy.

The ways in which the work-based intervention on school discipline has been maintained and enhanced is all the more remarkable when one takes into account that this school functions under particularly challenging external contextual conditions.

School 2: Strelitzia Primary School

CONTEXT (C): Strelitzia Primary School

Introduction to the school

Strelitzia Primary School is similar to Tulip Primary as it is a convent school with the same explicitly espoused religious ethos. However it differs in being an all girls' school that is located in the large manicured grounds of an affluent 'leafy suburb'. The campus has an extremely high standard of facilities, maintenance and resources that offer provision to the varied selection of academic, cultural, sport and outreach programmes on offer. There is the additional support to the community of an after-care facility for learners and a crèche for the children of staff.

External context

Socio-economic status

Strelitzia Primary's socio-economic status is defined by its location in a well-established up-market suburb. Access to the school is limited mainly to those who can afford the fees, with a preference given to learners with family members who were previously, or are presently at the school. The parental vehicle provides the main mode of learner transportation.

Parental involvement

The school is very well supported by its community through their attendance at church and school related activities. This regular exposure fosters positive connections between the school, community members and families.

Internal school context

The internal school context has a religious ethos that is identified in its rules, rituals, symbols, morals and values. This ethos extends to the school community and to pastoral care through an active outreach programme. There is respect from parents and learners for the school leadership and for the long-serving committed staff, many of whom are 'old girls' of the school. This relationship translates into a united focus on the learners' academic, cultural and sporting achievements. It contributes to a communal sense of belonging in what is often heard referred to as the 'school family'. The good reputation acquired by the school, the teachers confirmed in this example of its long waiting list for admission.

1st Teacher: The children are happy here.

Researcher: And the staff?

2nd Teacher: Very happy

1st Teacher: They wouldn't stay, if they weren't. That's also why it attracts teachers.

It attracts parents as well, because people go home and tell other schools that they like this school and the parents say the same, and we have a waiting list, a huge waiting list to get into the school.

(Teacher focus group discussion, 12 September 2012)

In line with this religious ethos, a scholarship programme is available to girls with potential who come from less privileged socio-economic backgrounds.

MECHANISMS (M): Strelitzia Primary School

The principal reported he found the staff to be 'doing everything that should be done' in relation to discipline but there were no formal structures in place to adequately record this. The proposed project had a progressive discipline focus within which teaching and learning was anticipated to improve through the effective implementation of the discipline policy. This informed his proposal to the school community and determined the theory of change set out below.

Aim of the work-based project on discipline in Strelitzia Primary School:

The implementation of the school discipline policy with a more structured approach will ensure effective teaching and learning will take place.

If

The discipline policy fully addresses the needs of the school; is in line with the vision and mission, the discipline committee is functional and effective, a forum is created for teachers and learners that allows for sharing and discussion and all school stakeholders are involved (M)

Then

Learner discipline will be easier for the staff to manage, learners will display self-discipline, responsibility and accountability in relation to their behaviour, and the atmosphere in the school will have a positive impact on teaching and learning (O)

Table 4.4: Strelitzia Primary School Theory of Change

The activities that were implemented in Strelitzia Primary are presented below.

Values-driven Activities	Rules-based Activities
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Specialist support to staff on working with children, team building and conflict management Staff and parents attend workshops on discipline. 2. Support counselling to learners by social workers Attend to learners with behavioural problems. 3. Introduction of Grade 7 mentor programme Training of teachers to develop Grade 7 learners as mentors. 4. Prayer meetings with focus on discipline Parent prayer team formed to meet weekly to pray for the school community. 5. Implementation of restorative measures of discipline Collective consistency in adopting strategies to promote learners' self-discipline and self-worth. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Information sessions for all stakeholders Resulted in a task team to design action plan. 2. Discipline policy implemented. Collective stakeholder agreement on strategies. 3. Advocacy campaign on Code of Conduct including questionnaire to parents and learners In newsletter, learner diary, public displays, information sessions, CoC read at line-up daily. 4. Formation and training of Discipline Committee to manage and monitor discipline policy SGB call for nominations, form committee and organise training programme. Draw up positive plan to develop and support learners and teachers. 5. Disciplinary hearing for major infringements Process and procedures followed by all parties. 6. Conflict management training programme run with Grade 6- 7. Teacher trained as mediation officer. 7. Regular meetings at all levels Discipline permanent agenda item at meetings. 8. Staff consensus to review discipline strategies that meet both the vision of the church and the constitution Alignment of strategies with spiritual aspect. 9. Formation of forum for disciplinary discussion For all stakeholders. 10. Discipline into School Improvement Plan On calendar & policy included in school prospectus.

Table 4.5: Strelitzia Primary School work-based project activities

In line with the needs of the project, the activities significantly focus on developing the process and procedural aspect of discipline. The values-driven activities build on the ethos to assist this more structured approach.

OUTCOMES (O): Strelitzia Primary School

Verification in 2012 of the 2009 reported claims

Verification from the deputy principal

In giving the list of fifteen activities to the principal, he pronounced them to either have been completed or still in operation. He reported they had all achieved some measure of success. In his opinion this was due to the caring ethos of the school. Its active promotion of the

Dominican motto ‘*Truth*’, he used as the platform to initiate and implement the project. In 2009 he reported discipline in the school to be generally good. However it was the collective lack of understanding of the school community as to what constituted formal disciplinary procedures and processes that was missing. Their acceptance of this allowed for the structured, inclusive approach he introduced to improve teaching and learning in a school already with high performance levels. This need was acknowledged by teachers and a parent.

1st Teacher: We needed smartening up

2nd Teacher: We did

3rd Teacher: And I think he did quite a good job.

(Teacher focus group discussion, 12 September 2012)

Structures were there but they were not overseen.

(Parent questionnaire, 13 September 2012)

Although the project promoted a collective agenda, the principal said he still had to drive it through his leadership and vision. He acknowledged his personality accommodated this system-driven approach to addressing change.

My greatest focus is to get systems running effectively and procedures running effectively. It's just who I am and the style that I have.

(Interview with principal 12 September 2012)

There were three unintended constraining factors reported in 2009 that he had to address. The staff held differing views on what constituted appropriate discipline activities. This was alleviated through deliberation until consensus was reached. The discipline style of a faction of parents was in direct conflict with that of the school which resulted in a parental education programme to target this issue. The active and successful mentor programme with grade 7 brought with it the realisation that a similar intervention had to be put in place for grade 6's for the mentor role they would play in the following year.

Verification from the school community

The teachers, learners and parents' said it was a direct involvement in meetings, discussions and updates to be of real value for them. However, the implementation of the discipline

policy they all identified to be the most significant activity. This verification was strongly in line with the aim of the project.

The learners said they found the inclusion of a male in the leadership of a girls' school had an effect on their behaviour. They noticed they responded differently to a male authority figure citing his presence, the timbre of his voice and the need to rise to his expectations as factors. Implicit here is that their behaviour improved as this discussion shows.

1st Learner: He's not our friend; he's like... the principal.

2nd Learner: We are reminded more often about our behaviour.

3rd Learner: And we know our boundaries with him.

(Learner focus group discussion, 12 September 2012)

The project was found to have developed further activities out of the original implementation strategies. Most were related to the strengthening of the disciplinary system which is indicated in the types of activities depicted in the table below.

Form of Activity	Activity	Principal	Teachers	Learners	Parents
Values-driven	1. Peer support programme	■	■	■	■
	2. Pastoral care outreach programme enhanced.	■			
	3. Religious education development in line with values	■			
	4. Counselling for staff and learners free of charge	■			■
	5. Public recognition of positive learner behaviour	■	■		
Rules-based	1. Code of conduct review with new strategies incorporated into School Improvement Plan	■			
	2. Mentor assigned to induct new staff into school processes including discipline	■			
	3. Discipline on departmental meeting agendas	■			
	4. Detention grade level lowered to Grade 3			■	■
	5. All Grade 7 assigned to monitoring tasks			■	■
	6. Lowering of infringements part of class and school practice		■	■	■
	7. Student Representative Council formed.			■	■

Table 4.6: Strelitzia Primary School activities that emanated from the project

All the activities were in operation however the focus is still on the procedural aspect of the project. The principal, teachers, learners and parents single out the values-driven peer support programme for special mention saying it was inclusive, high profile and current.

Researcher observation of school routines and practices

The teachers and learners were observed engaging in daily routines and practices in the classrooms and public spaces. The parents were a presence at the beginning and end of each school day and were supportive of all the extra-mural activities witnessed. The staff demonstrated professional practices in being task-focussed, especially outside of the prescribed working hours. They were always seen to be present and prepared for their classes. They exhibited a respectful and caring manner towards the learners which was reciprocated. Strikingly, no negative practices were observed and a management monitoring of these practices seemed unnecessary. This situation was almost ‘too good to be true’ with learners extremely well behaved and well mannered. No fear or tension was demonstrated which may signal a learner self-regulation of behaviour had developed and conformed to the expectations of that particular setting. This is an example of the significance, power and entrenchment of an ethos reflected in the behaviour of those who comprise the ‘school family’.

DISCUSSION

Strelitzia Primary showed evidence of sustained and enhanced improvement of its disciplinary practices. Like Tulip Primary, the school’s existing internal culture promotes the rituals, morals and values of its faith-based educational approach. The work-based project on discipline sought to make the regulatory practices more explicit as a matter of record. This would be achieved by engaging fully with the school community in the implementation of the discipline policy.

The smooth transition to a more procedural way of working was facilitated by the harmonious balance already in existence between the external and internal school context. The unprompted feedback of teachers, learners and the principal revealed their acknowledgment, ability and willingness to modify behaviour to improve on what is viewed collectively as a highly functioning school. The collective ethos provided the security for sustainment of the implementations and created opportunities for on-going improvement. Illustrative is the positive way the teachers and learners reacted to the proposed changes

imposed by a fairly recent male leader whilst simultaneously injecting a different management style into the context of what had previously been an all-female environment.

School 3: Daffodil Primary School

CONTEXT (C): Daffodil Primary School

Introduction to the school

Daffodil Primary is a well-established, highly respected, co-educational, quintile 4 school set in large well-maintained grounds. It is located in the centre of an older, residential, upper-middle class suburb characterised by its privately-owned properties and system of narrow one-way streets that contribute to traffic congestion at the beginning and end of the school day.

Previously an ex-model C school with a large contingent of learners (727 in 2012) in 2007, a female principal inherited the legacy of a succession of successful, revered, long-serving, male leaders. This daunting challenge caused her initially to feel somewhat insecure as she was aware she had a professional battle ahead to win over the watchful, very involved (almost domineering) school community. Following directly in the steps of these 'iconic' leaders provided the motivation to register on the ACE-SL programme. This provided the vehicle to develop her with skills necessary to perform in a workplace that would not condone any leadership and management weakness. The school has a high standard of facilities, resource provision and maintenance to support its academic, arts and culture and sports programmes. An after-care facility is available for learners to ensure their participation in the extra-mural programme.

External context

Socio-economic status

The residential area of the school is adjacent to a well-known business 'hub'. The school fees reflect the upper-middle class, socio-economic status of the learners' home background with the majority (80%) of them residing in the area. The school is categorised as upper quintile and not restricted by zoning regulations, which means it is not obligated to prioritise catchment area learners, but is able to offer placement through a selection process. This

allows access to learners with potential, some of whom are recipients of school bursaries, who travel from outlying disadvantaged areas on mainly public transport.

Parental Involvement

The significant number of the school community who reside in the area affords social contact both in and outside of school which fosters a sense of community, cohesion and attachment. This can be a positive or negative factor which can, on occasion, manifest itself in overt parental interference.

Internal school context

The school is well-known in the city for its excellent standard of curriculum delivery from a highly qualified staff. Due to this status being maintained over time, the provincial education department utilise the school as a reliable site for piloting new education innovations for possible incorporation into the broader school system. The school community collaborate in all aspects of school life. Inclusivity, diversity and a sharing of expertise and knowledge is promoted and acknowledged as the way forward for the school to address change.

1st Teacher: What I appreciate most about the teachers that I work with is that they value relationships.

2nd Teacher: Yes, it's everyone agreeing to do that, rather than told to do that.

(Teacher focus group discussion, 20 September 2012)

In line with this vision, extra-mural participation is an expectation of all learners and an array of activities are on offer. The availability and expected utilisation of the after-care facility ensures the choices available on the school programme are accessible to all learners.

MECHANISMS (M): Daffodil Primary School

In 2009 the principal reported the project was to be a 'new' means of engagement with the school community. This to make explicit the core values, vision and discipline practise of the school and align it with the regulatory system. The growing empowerment of individuals developed through an interaction with the project activities would result in improved teaching and learning and this informed Daffodil's theory of change which is presented below.

Aim of the work-based project on school discipline in Daffodil Primary School

To align the disciplinary measures to reflect the core values and vision of the school and empower individuals through value-based restorative interventions.

If

A review is conducted of the Vision & Mission and Codes of Conduct of the school and a more positive value-based approach to discipline is adopted (M)

Then

The stress levels demonstrated by teachers will decrease and the quality of teaching and learning will improve (O).

Table 4.7: Daffodil Primary School Theory of Change

Daffodil's theory of change refers to the adoption of a more values-based approach as its key mechanism. The activities that were implemented in the school are set out in the table below.

Values-driven Activities	Rules-based Activities
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Alignment of core values, vision and mission to school discipline practise Interaction with SGB, SMT, staff and parents to create a living, active vision and mission in support of positive discipline strategies. Involvement of all stakeholders Teachers unhappy on lack of clarity around discipline on board. The Parents' Forum ready for change. Input from learners on discipline problems demonstrated support. Value gained from inputs. Establishment of value systems at grade, staff and parent level Core values adopted at class, staff and parent level to align with vision and mission. Understanding of appropriate grade level behaviour In order that interventions were appropriate, consistent and fair. Staff beliefs on discipline explored To get consensus on teachers behaviour with respect to discipline Mediation in operation – all staff to be trained Improved learner behaviour evidenced by Grade 7 staff. All teachers to be trained. Regular information given to stakeholders Participative nature of each part of process ensured everyone involved. Email, website, newsletter and meetings further support this. Review of Code of Conduct to include positive wording No negative connotations in wording of codes. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Task team set up to design, implement and monitor programme Following inputs from staff, Parents' Forum and class discussions. Revisit Code of Conduct each year with learners Used as a support guide to remind learners of values and expected behaviour as well as consequences for infringements. Formation of discipline committee comprising of parents and teachers. Incorporated into the Parents' Forum. Record keeping on each learner Individual file introduced for easy access to information. Disciplinary hearings for major infringements Few were convened but internal suspension proved constructive with reflective tasks supported by school counsellor for learner and family.

Table 4.8: Daffodil Primary School work-based project activities

Although there are more values-driven activities the procedural aspect of discipline is not neglected. The rules-based activities offer support to the positive discipline activities being introduced.

OUTCOMES (O): Daffodil Primary School

Verification in 2012 of the 2009 reported claims

Verification from the principal

The principal, when given a list of the thirteen activities implemented in 2009, conveyed all to be in place. The formation of a Parents' Forum, as a more inclusive version of a school discipline committee, was given a positive discipline mandate. The principal reported it became a critical force through two avenues of support; by giving recommendations in response to discipline concerns and in keeping the project both highly visible and on track through contact with the school community groups.

The policy is constantly reviewed. We often have meetings and we change something, but this is not changing the whole policy. It's a living document. That is the reality of it. When issues arise we address them.

(Interview with principal, 13 September 2012)

The two constraining activities the principal reported were of staff defaulting to detention as a deterrent for learners, and the response of unhappy parents to this stance being taken by the school. The activism of the Parents' Forum defused what could have escalated into a confrontational situation by tabling for broader consideration being given to the consequences of negative learner behaviour. The lowering incidence of negative learner behaviour the principal attributes mainly to this forum's activism.

Project success was in her opinion proven. This she insisted could be seen in the evidence available, both in the school as well as beyond its confines.

The realisation is you have a responsibility to education as a whole if you're a good example at your school and that changed our strategic plan. Out of it came our teacher programme, our intern programme and to become a school of excellence. How we share all of this with others is we develop together and we take other teachers from other schools with us when we do it.

(Interview with principal, 13 September 2012)

Verification from the school community

The teachers, learners and parents confirmed the following activities were beneficial to the school; developing an understanding of appropriate grade level learner behaviour, exploring staff beliefs on discipline, information sharing, mediation training and the inclusion of more positive wording in the Code of Conduct. What the teachers and parents strongly expressed to be the most significant contribution however was their involvement in aligning the core values, vision and mission of the school to discipline practise.

It's democratic, consultative and inclusive. There's a lot more discussion. All stakeholders are involved (staff, learners, parents).

(Parent questionnaire, 17 September 2012)

This was not necessarily translated sufficiently enough to the full learner body as some learners spoke of not understanding of all the school rules.

1st Learner: They just give us something; they don't explain sometimes, they just say; 'You know that's the rules'.

2nd Learner: Ja

3rd Learner: Then we don't even get a chance to ask why. They just say; 'You are not allowed to do this'.

(Learner focus group discussion, 20 September 2012)

Implicit here is that undertaking and activity would not require a constant revisit or reminder to keep its message current.

There were activities discussed that emanated out of the project and these are set out below.

Form of activity	Activity	Principal	Teachers	Learners	Parents
Values-driven	1. Initiation of learner self-discipline programme.	■	■	■	■
	2. Staff selection process emphasis on beliefs and values to fit team approach	■			
	3. School assembly focus on values	■	■		
	4. Principal delegates more in running aspects of project to staff	■			
	5. Staff work with learners on differences regarding values between home and school		■		
	6. Staff mediators train Grade 7's	■		■	
	7. Mediation committee formed with student representation	■	■	■	
	8. Diversity working groups formed to address differences that may cause problems	■			

	9. Advocacy presentations and resources given to other schools	■			
	10. Staff increase in confidence made them willing to undertake other areas of concern	■			
Rules-based	1. Grading of disciplinary measures related to learnings about age-appropriate behaviour.		■		
	2. Referrals to Discipline Committee by social worker	■			
	3. 'Five Steps of Conduct' workshop model incorporated into the Code of Conduct		■		
	4. Consideration given to camera surveillance to deal with petty theft	■			
	5. Positive Discipline plan used as format for other policies	■			

Table 4.9: Daffodil Primary activities that emanated from the project

The values-driven activities still dominate in number with the restorative measures of learner self-development and mediation confirmed to be especially worthwhile developments. It is noteworthy that few activities are made mention of by the learners and only one by the parents. Implicit here is that they are no longer fully involved in the ongoing development process. It was teachers only who reported the activities came out of a reflection on the original project which indicates a restriction to the other groups participation to continued development. Of the rules-based activities, four activities consolidated what was already in place, with one, the consideration of camera surveillance in public areas an attempt to overcome petty theft. Adoption of this measure may go against the learner self-development programme which seeks to achieve a regulation of behaviour. Defaulting to a punitive, rather than a restorative measure could be detrimental to what this teacher attests to as accepted practice in solving discipline concerns.

*There is a willingness to actually pull together to try and sort things out.
It is about finding solutions, or finding working agreements, or relationships,
or whatever.*

(Teacher focus group discussion, 20 September 2012)

The school's commitment to the discipline project had broadened to a sharing of learnings and resources with other schools. The absorption of the activities into the school's practices afforded the opportunity to embrace broader concepts in an attempt to understand the differences that exist between the home and the school, and with other schools and cultures.

We have to adapt to changes. We have constant inputs in terms of looking at different cultures and at diversity.
(Teacher focus group discussion, 20 September 2012)

Researcher observation of school routines and practices

The observed school routines and practices were predominantly positive in nature and centred on both staff professionalism and the support and interest of the parents. The learners' behaviour reflected that an adherence to school rules and rituals were part of daily practice. The teachers' responses showed that whilst there was an assimilation of project activities into the school culture, this did not mean there was any slackening off of their vigilance.

Researcher: Has positive discipline become the part of the culture of the school?

1st Teacher: I think it's an ongoing thing because of the make-up of our school; we're so different and diverse that we have to re-look at it all the time.

2nd Teacher: Constantly.

3rd Teacher: We have to.

(Teacher focus group discussion, 20 September 2012)

DISCUSSION

Daffodil Primary's project had shown evidence of sustainment and enhancement of its disciplinary culture and practices. Moreover, it had encompassed to the sharing of their project's learnings with other schools in the district. It is the teachers' professional practice and the combined external interest and pressure from the parents and education department, that makes the school receptive to ongoing improvement. This public pressure to continuously perform could also exert a negative effect. However it is in the stability of the internal system, along with its collective belief in the school achieving its improvement goals that is able to offset this happening. The unprompted feedback given by all parties indicate their involvement was critical to the success of the project. The drivers of this are predominantly the principal, staff and the Parents' Forum. This may require attention to include learners to reflect a more inclusive representation.

The project provided the initial impetus for the principal to prove herself in what was considered a professionally judgemental environment, but the outcomes went beyond her

development as a school leader to that of a much broader developmental strategy of school improvement.

School 4: Rose Primary School

CONTEXT (C): Rose Primary School

Introduction to the school

In 2007, in a situation reminiscent of Daffodil Primary, leadership was transferred to a female from a long succession of male principals. It was this factor, along with the challenge in being the first person of colour in the composition of the school management team that precipitated the principal's entry onto the ACE-SL programme. The School Governing Body (SGB) proved highly supportive of this changed *modus operandi* of the school.

It was like learning to ride a bicycle and they were my training wheels and slowly they let me go. They let me ride on my own.

(Interview with principal, 17 September 2012).

Rose Primary is a well maintained, resourced, co-educational, quintile 3 school that provides a balanced academic, sport and extra-mural programme to learners from Grade 4-7(544 learners in 2012). Set in a lower-middle class suburb there is limited parking space around the school which causes traffic flow problems at the beginning and end of the school day. The school has an after-care facility on the premises.

External context

Socio-economic status

Rose Primary serves an upwardly mobile, upper working to middle-class, mainly commuter community (76%). The demographic of families residing in the area reflects this upward mobility with most of their children having transferred to schools located in more affluent areas.

Parental Involvement

As indicated above families residing in the area mainly choose not to send their children to the local facility. However 80% of the 'feeder' school learners' directly transfer to the school that would seem to indicate a level of stability in the composition of the parental body that could be utilised develop the school/community partnership and cohesion.

Internal school context

The school has developed the reputation for its high standard of curriculum delivery from a stable, long-serving, mostly female staff. However, the equally long-serving administrative staff component presents somewhat of a challenge to management as they show a reluctance to support change. There is order in the school and a sense of belonging is promoted in the varied selection of extra-mural activities, which assisted by the well-attended after-care facility ensures all learners have access to the programme.

MECHANISMS (M): Rose Primary School

Rose Primary identified it had a discipline problem with learner-on-learner bullying. The principal identified this was not in alignment with the school's mission statement which reads;

Rose Primary School aims to create a safe and caring environment, enabling all to develop in an atmosphere of mutual respect and integrity. With passion we strive to unlock the potential for excellence in each individual in a climate of possibility.

Her work-based project therefore sought to overcome this misalignment. The school's theory of change in respect of this aim is set out below.

Aim of the work-based project on school discipline in Rose Primary School:

To adopt a Positive Discipline approach in order to improve the behaviour of learners

If

Learners are encouraged to be more self-confident through positive intervention strategies and teachers are proactive, involved and consistent in monitoring learner behaviour (M)

Then

The incidence of learner-on-learner bullying will decrease and the school will become a more conducive working environment that will assist effective teaching and learning to take place (O)

Table 4.10: Rose Primary School Theory of Change

The logic that a development of learner self-management combined with the support of a proactive and vigilant staff will achieve the desired result informed the activities that were implemented and these are presented in the following table.

Values-driven Activities	Rules-based Activities
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Buy-in of staff: Staff motivated for workshop on positive discipline which resulted from an incident involving boys using power over a girl. 2. SGB support: SGB indicated stakeholder understanding of process needed. Meeting with parents called for review of code of conduct. 3. Development of learner self-control: Learners agreed that the problem of bullying be addressed. Staff adherence to monitoring of learners and being role-model for them; learner-led sessions, discussions and reflections all assisted in modification of learner behaviour. 4. Specialist support on discipline strategies to staff: Workshop on restorative justice. Situational analysis with strategies adopted. Viewed as a staff developmental process 5. Assembly to focus on values: Principal-led to increase/sustain stakeholder awareness 6. Increased awareness of learners as to values of caring Discussion with learners and success stories shared. Ownership displayed by learners taking care of play areas. 7. Certificates awarded for acts of caring In assembly to publically highlight the virtue of the action 8. School declared a no bully zone: Agreement with learners. Awareness campaign mounted with result number of victims disclosing bullies increased. Survey end of 2009 showed decrease in all types of bullying. 9. Counselling of bullies by social workers Undertaken on individual basis and collective anger management workshop undertaken. General behavioural workshops for younger learners. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review and revision of code of conduct: With all stakeholders which was first undertaken with teachers and learners. 2. Grade 6 learners developed discipline plan 3. Formation of disciplinary committee To oversee review of Code of Conduct, implementation and learner penalties for infringement 4. Line monitors introduced Initially introduced but increase in teacher monitoring later made redundant 5. Introduction of strategies to learners Class discussions to ensure understanding of why strategies are put in place 6. Teacher punctuality Staff awareness/ adherence to being on time as a discipline practice 7. Consistency on the wearing of school uniform Learners periodically test boundaries 8. Class rules for teachers and learners Each class devise agreed rules. 9. Regular meetings, discussions and information updates with all stakeholders On meeting agenda, via learners, circulars etc.

Table 4.11: Rose Primary School work-based project activities

There is an equal balance of implemented values-driven and rules-based activities even though the project aim was clearly to embrace a positive discipline approach.

OUTCOMES (O): Rose Primary School

Verification in 2012 of the 2009 reported claims

Verification by the principal

The principal, in engaging with the presented list of eighteen activities, maintained that all had been implemented bar one; the introduction of line monitors. This had fallen away due to the increased presence and vigilance of teachers in the play areas during breaks. Although the activities had been implemented, a large faction of staff members still exhibited insecurity to fully embracing a values-driven approach by reverting to the safety net of punitive measures. Another constraint reported by the principal was in the lack of project timelines or targets. This had been addressed by putting indicators of progress in place which assisted in moving the project forward. She found that acknowledging success was the motivator in overcoming constraints and to keeping the project aim in sight.

We are addressing issues and looking at the positive ways of discipline to change from a more punitive way to a more reflective practice.

(Interview with principal, 17 September 2012)

The principal used the phrase ‘it is a work in progress’ often to describe what she considered was presently a moderately successful project. Affirming for her was the evidence of success provided by the reduction in the incidence of bullying. It was the continued vacillation of staff from the values approach back to familiarity and lack of responsibility of the rules-based approach to dealing with discipline issues, that served to inhibit and slow down the progress of the project.

Verification from the school community

The activities referred to by the teachers, learners and parents to have been of value centred on the revision of the Code of Conduct and the application of procedural discipline strategies. That strong value is placed on rules-based activities in a values-driven project affirms the tendency to vacillate which the principal referred to, and the teachers’ confirm.

1st Teacher: We’ve got two different ways of doing things and I don’t see us running both successfully at this school unless we get learner buy-in, get parent buy-in.

Researcher: How would you get that?

2nd Teacher: Get parents together and make them aware and educate them about what is allowed and what is not allowed. What are our rules, what is our Code of Conduct. I don't think parents realise because sometimes they come to meetings and they're upset about their child having to go to detention, and they're like; 'I don't know what's going on here', and only then do they want to know; 'What is your Code of Conduct?'

(Teacher focus group discussion, 26 September 2012)

There was a strong consensus that bullying had noticeably decreased with this attributed to the level of school community involvement which had been sustained through a shared vision, teamwork and the consistent vigilance of staff during school breaks. This sense of 'being on the same page' is conveyed in the following discussion.

Researcher: Do you have a shared vision of what you're doing and work together as a team? Is that happening here?

1st Teacher: Most of the time.

2nd Teacher: I think so, yes.

3rd Teacher: Most of the time.

2nd Teacher: On bullying I would say we are all talking.....

1st Teacher: The same language.

3rd Teacher: The same language, oh yes.

(Teacher focus group discussion, 26 September 2012)

It has led to improvement. My granddaughter, a monitor in grade 7 has little to report on bad learner behaviour which she ascribes to the anti-bullying and the 'Dare Not to Swear' awareness campaigns.

(Parent questionnaire, 25 September 2012)

The recognition of this success, whilst concurrently falling back on a familiar punitive methodology, is perhaps confirmation that improvement takes the time it requires to incorporate it fully into the culture of a particular school setting.

There were activities discussed by the respondents that were not part of the original project and these are listed in the table below.

Form of Activity	Activity	Principal	Teachers	Learners	Parents
Values-driven	1. Continued project support of SGB	■			
	2. Development of learner awareness and acceptance of consequences of actions		■	■	■
	3. Learner-driven campaign: 'Dare Not to Swear'	■	■	■	■
	4. Learner self-responsibility challenges		■		
	5. Reflection Corner	■			
	6. Suggestion Box	■			
	7. Caring Circles	■		■	
	8. Joint planning in grades		■		
	9. Reflection sessions on practice		■		
	10. Permanent appointment of social worker		■		
	11. Building stakeholder relationships		■		
Rules-based	1. Active discipline committee	■	■	■	■

Table 4.12: Rose Primary School activities that emanated from the project

The shift to a considerably more values-driven focus in the choice of activities gives credence to the principal's assertion that the school is committed to change. However this is somewhat offset by the continuation of the staff referring difficulties with learners to the disciplinary committee. Hence the prominence afforded to it by all parties. It is the single, yet highly significant rule-based activity. This may highlight it as an inhibitor to fully cementing the positive discipline approach sought by the school. Yet the success of the bullying campaign and its follow-up 'Dare Not to Swear' campaign with a focus on the development of learner agency gives positive evidence from teachers and learners of the potential that exists in the school to overcome this default.

There are major attempts (to work on the values), I mean we've got a 'Dare Not to Swear' campaign and a bully campaign and its ongoing and the learners are constantly being reminded of it by our principal in the assemblies.

(Teacher focus group discussion, 26 September 2012)

Researcher: What happens with the ones that are still bullies?

1st Learner: Most of the time the child comes up to the teacher and speaks about it and if they can get exactly who the bully is, they'll talk to them, they'll

... speak to them and maybe give them detention. They get punished so they can see the consequences.

2nd Learner: But it depends whether you're a first time offender, because if you've done something repeatedly over the year, like, you've cut the line at the tuckshop, then you would normally be sent to the office, but if you've done it once, you normally go to the reflection corner and the teacher would just talk to you about it.

3rd Learner: I think more teachers were on duty and because of the campaign, nobody felt as scared to speak up because...

1st Learner: Because the teachers were right there. They also sent around little petitions as well, you can sign up to say you will never swear again and you encourage learners not to swear. When I was on duty on the field this one child actually swore and the others shouted out; 'Please don't do that!'

(Learner focus group discussion, 26 September 2012)

Researcher observation of school routines and practices

The observed school routines and practices in Rose Primary were predominantly positive and centred on professional practices such as an adherence to time, being present and prepared with attention focussed on the children. In freely moving about the school both teaching and learning was seen to be taking place in classroom atmospheres of positive engagement. The constant presence of staff in play areas meant learners were timeous at line-up and their behaviour was generally witnessed to be good with any potential incidents immediately given attention.

1st Teacher: We're accountable to the learners and we're also accountable to the parents.

2nd Teacher: In our school there's a high level of accountability.

1st Teacher: We get our work done. We know that sometimes we have our little issues here and there, but the work gets across every day. From the teachers' point of view at least.

(Teacher focus group discussion, 26 September 2012)

The solitary negative practice observed was in the attitude of administrative staff. The principal viewed this as an historical legacy of the ownership of space and position that served a previous regime combined with the administrators not adapting to the changes in the demographic of the school community. As such it may be construed as a form of bullying, which ironically the project sought to eradicate in the behaviour of learners. By the principal's own admission it had not been fully addressed and it contributed negatively to the ethos she was intent on creating.

DISCUSSION

Rose Primary showed evidence of sustained and enhanced improvement of its disciplinary culture and practices. The school's existing internal culture was seen to predominantly promote the rituals, morals and values of a regulative approach to teaching and learning. The school ethos is explicitly manifested through its rules-based practice. The activities initiated through the work-based project on discipline looked to promote a more positive discipline practice.

The intention to reduce the incidence of bullying through the introduction of values-based strategies was successful but it also revealed a staff reticence to fully embrace a positive approach. The default to the security of the rules and regulations was indicative that in this situation the absorption of a new practice into the school culture takes time. The unprompted feedback given by teachers, learners and the principal shows the potential is present to overcome this staff vacillation as their support of campaigns to change behaviour shows even if this is presently offset by an over-active disciplinary committee.

School 5: Gardenia Primary School

CONTEXT (C): Gardenia Primary School

Introduction to the school

Founded in 1957 as a school for girls, Gardenia Primary remains a small, exclusive, quintile 5 state school (230 learners in 2012) located on what is considered to be on the 'right' side of the railway line that socio-economically bisects and demarcates status in the residential southern suburbs of the city. A female principal presides over a team of female teachers, classroom support staff and extra-mural staff in what is a well maintained and highly

resourced environment. She entered the ACE-SL programme to expand on her leadership and management skills.

External context

Socio-economic status

The high socio-economic status of most of the parent body is reflected in the entitlement manner of a percentage of the parents and their children which is considered by the staff to be the main contributing factor to the discipline problem of the school. The learners are transported by their parents from the nearby affluent areas in which they reside.

Parental Involvement

The external context is characterised by a ‘mother and daughter club’ element; a ‘togetherness’ not against; but with little respect for the authority of the school. It is a ‘master/servant’ attitude that translates into the demonstrable behaviour of a flaunting of uniform, persistent lateness and a freedom to speak to staff in a condescending, rude and patronising manner. This is pervasive and powerful yet it does not apply to most families who are supportive of the school.

Internal school context

The school states in its brochure it delivers a quality education. In line with this expectation it is consistently a top performer in the provincial grade 3 and 6 systemic evaluation. Academic achievement is attributed to learners having a solid foundation in language and study skills. There is a strong emphasis on arts and culture and this is supported by private specialist tutors to maintain its high standard. Sports teams and individual learners receive professional coaching. The progression rate is consistently between 97 and 100% and there is high parental involvement in all aspects of the school. Gardenia takes pride in the learners developing ecological awareness, a culture of reading and independent thinking. Co-operative learning support is available to those who experience any barriers to learning.

MECHANISMS (M): Gardenia Primary School

The work-based project looked to teaming staff and parents in order to improve learner behaviour. The principal demonstrated her awareness of the source of the discipline problem in this choice of project. She envisaged that a modification of parental behaviour patterns

would exert a positive impact on the internal culture of the school. The school's theory of change in this regard is represented in the table below.

<p>Aim of the work-based project in Gardenia Primary School: A review of the discipline policy with all stakeholders and the implementation of the resultant positive discipline action plan will result in improved teaching and learning</p> <p>If <i>The discipline policy is reviewed; the staff and parents adopt and support the policy and it is consistently and fairly implemented (M)</i></p> <p>Then The behaviour of the learners regarding late-coming, lack of respect and dress code will improve, and have a positive impact on teaching and learning (O)</p>
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Table 4.13: Gardenia Primary School Theory of Change

The theory of change refers to a change of mind-set and to the consistency of staff and parents to actively implement the discipline policy of the school. The activities implemented are indicated in the table below.

<p>Values-driven Activities:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Inclusion of all stakeholders</i> Principal and SMT determined staff and learners would review policy and parents consulted. Discussion identified areas of concern. <i>Link of discipline to school vision and mission statement</i> To include all stakeholders to take ownership in what had been initially a 'top-down' approach. <i>Inclusion of positive discipline topics at weekly assembly</i> By the principal with follow up by teachers and learners in class. <i>Update on progress in weekly newsletter</i> Assembly focus communicated to parents with suggestions to develop support positive behaviour in learners. <i>Reward and acknowledgement to learners for positive behaviour.</i> At assembly from nominations. <i>'Random Acts of Kindness' campaign</i> Learners reflect in class on who they notice give consideration to others. <i>'Focus on a caring school' campaign</i> Acts of caring and kindness a successful aspect to build on. 	<p>Rules-based Activities:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Revision of Code of Conduct</i> By all stakeholders. <i>Letter to parents when learner contravening dress code</i> Mostly related to jewellery and accessories. Staff monitoring has minimised incidence. <i>SMT and staff develop and implement a discipline plan</i> Agreed action plan put into operation. <i>Principal follow-up with habitual late -comers</i> Addressing parents directly when dropping off their children. <i>Late-letter system introduced</i> Three late letters means learner stays in school to catch up on work missed. <i>Teacher punctuality during school day</i> Teachers to model punctuality practice. <i>HoD monitoring of staff</i> To ensure consistency and agreed mechanisms being implemented.
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Table 4.14: Gardenia Primary School work-based project activities

The activities involved the school community and are evenly weighted between values-driven and rules-based activities that may indicate a balance was considered necessary to effect improvement.

OUTCOMES (O): Gardenia Primary School

Verification in 2012 of the 2009 reported claims

Verification from the principal

On being presented with the list of fourteen activities, the principal stated they had all been implemented. However it was the adoption of the project that she considered as instrumental to its success. She revealed it came about with great effort on her part.

I really had to work on the buy-in and when they picked it up I said; 'That is brilliant!'

(Interview with principal, 14 September 2012).

The implication from the principal was that the project had been relatively successful yet there were many unintended constraining factors. The verification of these factors is important as to the extent they impacted on the project's ability to effect change. Significant too was the principal's reflection on what the project did not achieve as this signalled her wish for a better result.

I certainly would have wanted it to be more values driven with self-discipline and respect for everyone so you're teaching a value that the child must embody.

(Interview with principal, 14 September 2012).

Verification from the school community

The project activities reported by the principal were not referred to by the teachers and learners and only one parent made reference, and that was to the value of project updates in the weekly newsletter. The teachers and learners' comments centred firmly on unacceptable parent and learner behaviour. They did not consider there to be any effective measures in place to deal with this issue.

Researcher: What do you think about discipline?

1st Learner: OK, honestly, I'm going to be fair with you, it's not good.

Compared to other schools it's quite different.

2nd Learner: There's one girl who talks consistently about topics that aren't relevant and the reason why they won't discipline her is because her mother will come. I think last year our teacher had a lot of problems with the parents. So this year she's not really up for it. It's hard for her.

(Learner focus group discussion, 21 September 2012)

1st Teacher: There are no boundaries on the way the parents speak to us you know. You are expected to have the greatest respect for their children and yet they can walk in and tear you to bits in a matter of seconds.

2nd Teacher: You know, we are feeling quite undermined and in a sense not supported.

(Teacher focus group discussion, 21 September 2012)

Parent questionnaire 1: I think discipline starts at home. If the children are not getting disciplined the behaviour is brought to the school.

Parent questionnaire 2: There are those learners that are a continuous problem. More drastic measures need to be taken.

Parent questionnaire 3: Children need to have boundaries and understand that bad behaviour has consequences. Teachers' need parents support when it comes to discipline.

(Parent questionnaire, 19 September 2012)

This issue overrode any possibility for reflections on the implemented activities highlighting its significance in the school. It weakened the ability of the project to sustain improvement due to a percentage of parents and their children affecting the rest of the school community.

There was no mention of any activities to have emanated out of the project. According to the teachers this was because the issue had not been addressed either through the SGB or the Parents' Forum therefore the status quo remained.

Researcher observation of school routines and practices

The teachers were witnessed to be highly professional in the workplace. As such it is probably not unrealistic for them to have an expectation of management support and parental respect. They demonstrated school routines and practices of punctuality, teaching to time, classroom management, lesson preparation and working overtime.

I remember one particular principal saying how the teachers left early because it was a difficult place to work and it didn't enter my mind as my teachers are here until four, five o'clock.

(Interview with principal, 14 September 2012).

DISCUSSION

Gardenia Primary showed no evidence of sustained and enhanced improvement of its disciplinary culture and practices. What is pertinent here is that whilst the school's existing internal culture promotes the rituals, morals and values through its approach to teaching and learning, it cannot overcome the challenges of its external context. This is explicitly manifested through the flaunting of these established routines and practices by a small yet powerful group. The intervention initiated through the work-based project on discipline was introduced and implemented but the discipline problem persisted.

Even though the intention was to establish the disciplinary infrastructure to support implementation, the unprompted feedback given by teachers and learners shows the extent to which a minority component of the school community were able to exert an influence. The management allowance of this situation to continue unabated, reinforces a negative practice. This modus operandi of disrespect derailed any possibility of sustained project improvement. The disjuncture between staff and parents as to a common understanding of what is meant by respect, responsibility and accountability in a school setting is the main contributory factor to achieving project success.

Conclusion

Each case study shows a different relationship between internal and external contexts. Whatever that relationship is, it has a determining effect on how an intervention can be taken up and enhanced by a school. The schools were therefore able to implement projects in their contexts with varying measures of success. These findings are discussed more fully in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

This chapter sets out the findings as determined by the data analysis and interprets these in response to the research question. The aim is to identify patterns of intra- and inter-contextual congruity that will substantiate a more general conclusion about the extent to which contexts affect the ability of schools to sustain and enhance improvement interventions.

Overview of the study

Flowing from a professional qualification, which required evidence of a successful school improvement intervention through a work-based project, the research question was:

What in the social context of a school sustains and enhances improvement interventions, once these interventions have been implemented through the mechanism of a work-based project?

Each principal in the sample could present evidence of successful implementation of a work-based project on school discipline. The principal designed and managed the project which was then presented as evidence of applied competence in school leadership and management. But what role did enabling and constraining contexts play? Under what conditions were each intervention's causal potential released? This was what the study wanted to investigate.

The study started by re-describing the aims of the planned intervention on school discipline and the proof of successful implementation, which each of the five school principals in the sample provided as evidence of applied competence. This cast the case study as a $C + M = O$ configuration which provided the basis for the 2012 follow-up study. The follow-up study solicited unprompted evidence from all members of the school community, except from the principal who was asked to be the formal verifier of either sustained or discontinued intervention activities.

Crucial to each case study was a provisional analysis of the role of configurations of external and internal contexts in bringing about success or partial success; or, alternatively, failure or partial failure.

In the next section the findings are presented in a more general form. In order to achieve this in the text, pseudonyms are dropped and schools are numbered from 1 to 5. Given that the analysis in Chapter 4 was presented in terms of the relationship between context, mechanism and outcome ($C + M = O$), the findings are presented in that frame.

Discussion of the findings

Relations between external and internal school contexts (C) and their role in triggering or constraining planned mechanisms of change (M).

Table 5.1 below presents a summary of the three contextual variables investigated as part of each case study. In the explanation that follows after the table, the dynamics of the relation between the contextual conditions in each school is briefly discussed.

	EXTERNAL		INTERNAL
School	Socio-Economic Status	Parental involvement	School Culture
School 1	Low Blue-collar/unemployed parental workforce from disadvantaged communities	Low Residing out of area in disadvantaged communities strongly inhibits parental engagement with the school	Strong positive faith-based culture
School 2	High Upper economic community status	High Parents are consistently supportive in synchronicity with the school	Strong positive faith-based culture
School 3	Medium – High Upper middle class community	High Inclined to interfere in the running of the school due to high expectations of performance.	Strong positive culture. Role model for provincial norms and standards
School 4	Medium – Low Middle to low working class community	Medium Families predominantly reside out of area. A stable school community yet lacking in agency to interact fully with the school	Strong procedural culture but staff resistant to change
School 5	High Upper economic community status	High Supportive parents but a percentage exert power by flaunting rules and regulations	Strong procedural culture but lack of management support to staff

Table 5.1: Overview of relation between external and internal contexts

Findings at the level of the individual school

School 1 (S1):

The school's religious ethos was so firmly embedded that the internal culture demonstrated an unspoken acceptance and adherence to the rules and practices of the school. This strong identification of being part of this internal community made the school receptive to the incorporation of an improvement initiative. Project activities in becoming part of the daily routine of the school are absorbed into and reinforce affiliation to this well-established culture. The internal context in this way is able to overcome the constraints exerted by its external context characterised by socio-economic disadvantage.

School 2 (S2):

Due to the school's historically embedded culture that centres on values its external and internal context are in a harmonious balance. This generational continuity allowed the school to systematise a regulative practice and facilitate its incorporation into its culture without disturbing the existing symbiotic relationship between its external and internal contexts.

School 3 (S3):

The internal and external context are both positive, but the external context threatens to overwhelm the internal context of this school. The over-attentive parents and the use of the school by the department of education as a model of excellence for other schools in the district constantly makes its internal practices subject to public scrutiny. This puts the internal context under threat from the external context and results in there being little time for development. The school has adapted to this however. By determining a flexible, yet definite boundary, it does not allow its school culture to be driven by the expectations of its external community.

School 4 (S4):

The internal culture of Rose Primary, whilst strong, is resistant to change. The staff, comfortable in a regulatory framework in which they are not required to take responsibility (but constantly devolve to the disciplinary committee) are not receptive to the advantages afforded by change. This affirms that if an internal culture is not already in place then it is not

necessarily receptive to the proposed changes. The unreliability of the staff members to stick to a different approach shows that resistance is not necessarily overt but a default to the security of past experience. The continued, inflexible commitment to change by the management of the school demonstrates this awareness with the realisation that improvement will be in a timeframe that is relative to its particular contextual challenges.

School 5 (S5):

Gardenia is hampered by external factors that negatively impact on the ability of the internal culture to incorporate project activities strongly enough to withstand the force of them. Here, where the leadership of the school had the opportunity to exert an influence it did not do so, and this was powerfully exploited by a faction of the external community despite this force not being in the majority.

Comparative findings

Differences in socio-economic status

The schools exhibited differences in socio-economic context but the outcome was still achieved in four of them. School 1 with low socio-economic context met its project target, yet School 5 with high socio-economic context could not get the project to stick. This is indicative that the socio-economic context on its own cannot always be viewed as a constraining factor on the ability of a school to improve as Schools 1 and 4 demonstrated being categorised in the lower quintiles. School 3 operated at a level expected by the quintile designation but School 5 accorded the highest quintile did not. School 2 (non-quintile) was in line with its socio-economic status being a highly functioning, high performance level school. The schools therefore did not reflect 20-80% split referred to by Van der Berg *et al* (2011: 3) where he states the prospects for children from poorer communities are less than those from more affluent backgrounds. The contrast of the success of the more disadvantaged School 1 in comparison to the struggle to implement change in the considerably more affluent School 5 particularly attests to this and demonstrates the school has the power to influence outcomes.

Differences in level and types of parental involvement

The level and type of parental involvement in the schools is varied. Some forms of parental involvement was found to be positive and harmonious (S2), others viewed as interfering (S3), passive (S1, S4) and even destructive (S1). In School 5 it hampered the internal ability to sustain and improve on the intervention and the status quo remained. Yet no form of parental involvement was such a strong constraining factor that the successful implementation of the intervention was threatened.

Differences in internal school culture

School 1 and School 2 both have a predominantly values-driven school culture. School 4 and School 5 have predominantly rules-based cultures. What this shows is that a dominance in a school culture of either values or rules leads to successful implementation outcomes, but with two provisos:

1. that the primary culture is backed up by the other ethos, *e.g.*:

<u>Values</u>	OR	<u>Rules</u>
Rules		Values

2. that there is evidence of internalisation of this culture in terms of everyday school routines and practices.

School 1 and School 2

In School 2 there is congruence between the three variables to set up an enabling intervention context. In School 1 the external contexts are opposite to those found in School 2. It would be fair to say that School 1's socio-economic and parental involvement status is what the literature describes as typical of a low achieving school. Yet School 1 did not only sustain the school discipline intervention, there was evidence of further enhancement. So how is this to be explained? The common factor lies in the strongly established and consensual faith-based culture that permeates both schools. The conclusion can be drawn that a strong moral order, or what Bernstein (1966) calls consensual rituals, has the capacity to overcome the constraints imposed by the socio-economic context and the lack of parental involvement.

School 2 and School 5

School 2 and School 5 both exhibit high a socio-economic context but very different levels of parental involvement and school culture. In School 2 the parental involvement is highly supportive and fits into the school culture and the combination of these variables not only accommodate initiatives but improves on them. School 5 in contrast has a parental involvement that exerts a disruptive force and a school culture that is not fully supportive. While there was project implementation there was no sustainable improvement. The conclusion can be drawn that a high socio-economic context is not a factor to improvement and it is the other variables that exert influence to either enable or constrain an intervention.

School 3 and School 5

School 3 and School 5 have variability in socio-economic context that is not dramatic and both have strong school cultures. The parental involvement is high in both schools but in School 5 that has a negative impact while in School 3 the parental interference is held at bay through the autonomy held by the school culture. The school culture in School 5, whilst conforming to a procedural code is not supportive in its implementation. The conclusion can be drawn that a school culture if very strong can withstand the constraints imposed by the parental involvement but if it is not the parental involvement can exert impact on the school culture.

School 1 and School 4

The finding above with School 3 and School 5 is mirrored in School 1 and School 4. Their socio-economic context and parental involvement are respectively low and medium which differs from School 3 and School 5. However the socio-economic context and parental involvement (related to 'out of area' disadvantage) are not constraining enough to overcome the strong internal forces exerted by school culture in School 1 (positive) and School 4 (negative). This confirms the previous finding that it is the strength of the SC that is critical to withstanding parental involvement and socio-economic context.

School 3 and School 4

School 3 and School 4 have different socio-economic context and parental involvement but strong school cultures. They demonstrate different measures of success that relate to school culture. In School 3 the school culture experiences resistance to change whilst in School 4 the school culture is very positive. In School 4 the school culture was slowly eroding the

constraining influence indicating that a timeframe to incorporate change into the school culture is not prescriptive but relative to the context.

The conclusion can be drawn a strong school culture can exert a force that can be positive or negative to an intervention.

Interpretation and Conclusions

The case study approach undertaken in this study is not without its limitations. In case study research it is not feasible to generalise findings that derive from one case or a limited set of cases. This does not mean, however, that a qualitative study may not put forward general, if provisional conclusions. Rule & John (2011: 133) cite Bassey (1999) who argues that ‘it is not possible to make definitive claims based on one or a few cases that will automatically apply to others. However, it is possible to make tentative or “fuzzy” generalisations that people in other contexts could test in relation to their own cases.’

It is in this spirit that the study concludes with a set of general claims which emerges prominently from the analysis. Taken together they extend our understanding of how internal and external school contexts impact on school leadership and simultaneously serve as a basis for further investigation and confirmation.

1. If a school culture is strong and carried by deeper community relations it can bring about positive change despite the constraints imposed by its socio-economic status.
2. The level of parental involvement in the values and culture of the school carries an influence.
3. A culture with a historically generated value-system (such as in the faith-based schools) has the ability to transcend the context because of what it is that brings about cohesion to the different forms of differentiation that reside within its community.
 - Where a symbiotic relationship exists a balance is achieved that is receptive to school improvement
 - A positive but over-whelming interest threatens the school culture
 - A negative interest and interference is similarly threatening to the school culture
 - Little interest does not impact significantly on the school culture

The analysis above shows how important it is to take contextual factors into consideration when trying to understand what triggers change. Successful achievement of an intervention’s

outcomes cannot be ascribed only to individual leadership competency. Causality must be understood in terms of a relation between the contexts of implementation and the generative mechanisms employed. It is this combination that triggers action that leads to change.

How then does this finding speak back to the ACE-SL programme itself?

What this holds for a professional development programme in school leadership and management is that, if there any lesson to be learnt, it is that a reflection on context is critical. Reflection has to be built in at a deeper level than what an initial situational analysis of a school currently allows. This has to focus on the interplay between and within external and internal school contexts.

In this deeper reflection there has to be an understanding that transformational leadership is not about an individual but is broader concept, one that is distributed and about dealing with the constraints imposed by context. An institution delivering such a qualification needs to take these constraints of context into consideration when assessing the competency of an individual to effect change.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Example of an ACE -SL course assessment instrument

Course: Manage policy, planning, school development and governance

Specific Outcomes	Level	Assessment Criteria	Evidence of competence	Comments
SO 1: Develop and communicate school values, vision, mission, policies and plans in a collaborative way and secure commitment to these.		1. Manage a process for the participative development of a school development plan with vision, mission and values based on context and needs analysis.		
		2. Develop and maintain structures and processes that support a consultative and participatory approach to decision making and planning.		
		3. Develop school policies (including those required by the South African Schools Act) in collaboration with stakeholders.		
		4. Work within the school community to translate the vision and policies into agreed operational plans that will achieve sustained school improvement.		
		5. Oversee the implementation of the vision, policies and plans and initiate corrective action as required.		
		6. Ensure that those involved in school remain committed to the school's values, vision, mission, policies and plans.		
		7. Evaluate and improve the effectiveness of the school's policies and plans.		
Specific Outcomes	Level	Assessment Criteria	Evidence of competence	Comments
SO 2:		1. Understand and apply cooperative governance in the school by making sure that the School Governing Body is legally constituted and fully functional.		

Specific Outcomes	Level	Assessment Criteria	Evidence of competence	Comments
Develop and maintain sound working relationships with the School Governing Body as well as parents, learners, the community and the department.				
		2. Negotiate with the School Governing Body to define clearly the governance and professional roles of the School Governing Body and the School Management Team.		
		3. Through the establishment of legally constituted and supported Representative Council of Learners, involve learners in the co-operative governance of the school.		
		4. Build relationships and partnerships with the community through efficient communication, marketing of the school and the involvement of parents/guardians and others.		
		5. Find and use appropriate ways to communicate with parents/guardians (for example, meetings and/or newsletters and/or personal letters, telephone calls) so that they understand school matters clearly and are motivated to be partners in the education of their children.		
		6. Communicate regularly in both formal and informal ways with the department in order to manage the school responsively.		
Specific Outcomes	Level	Assessment Criteria	Evidence of competence	Comments
SO 3:		1. Understand, and apply in a reflective way, developmental and operational planning.		

Specific Outcomes	Level	Assessment Criteria	Evidence of competence	Comments
Understand and be able to apply relevant content knowledge in leading and managing policy, planning, school development and governance.		2. Understand, and apply in a reflective way, the development of school policies in terms of the South African Schools Act and other relevant legislation.		
		3. Understand, and apply in a reflective way, school development and improvement.		
		4. Understand and apply in reflective way participatory approaches to decision -making, communication and the role of consultation in planning.		
		5. Understand, and apply in a reflective way, strategies, which encourage parents to support their children's learning.		

Signed

Assessor: Student:

Date of visit:

Student comment on:

Quality of experience	Outcome of site visit
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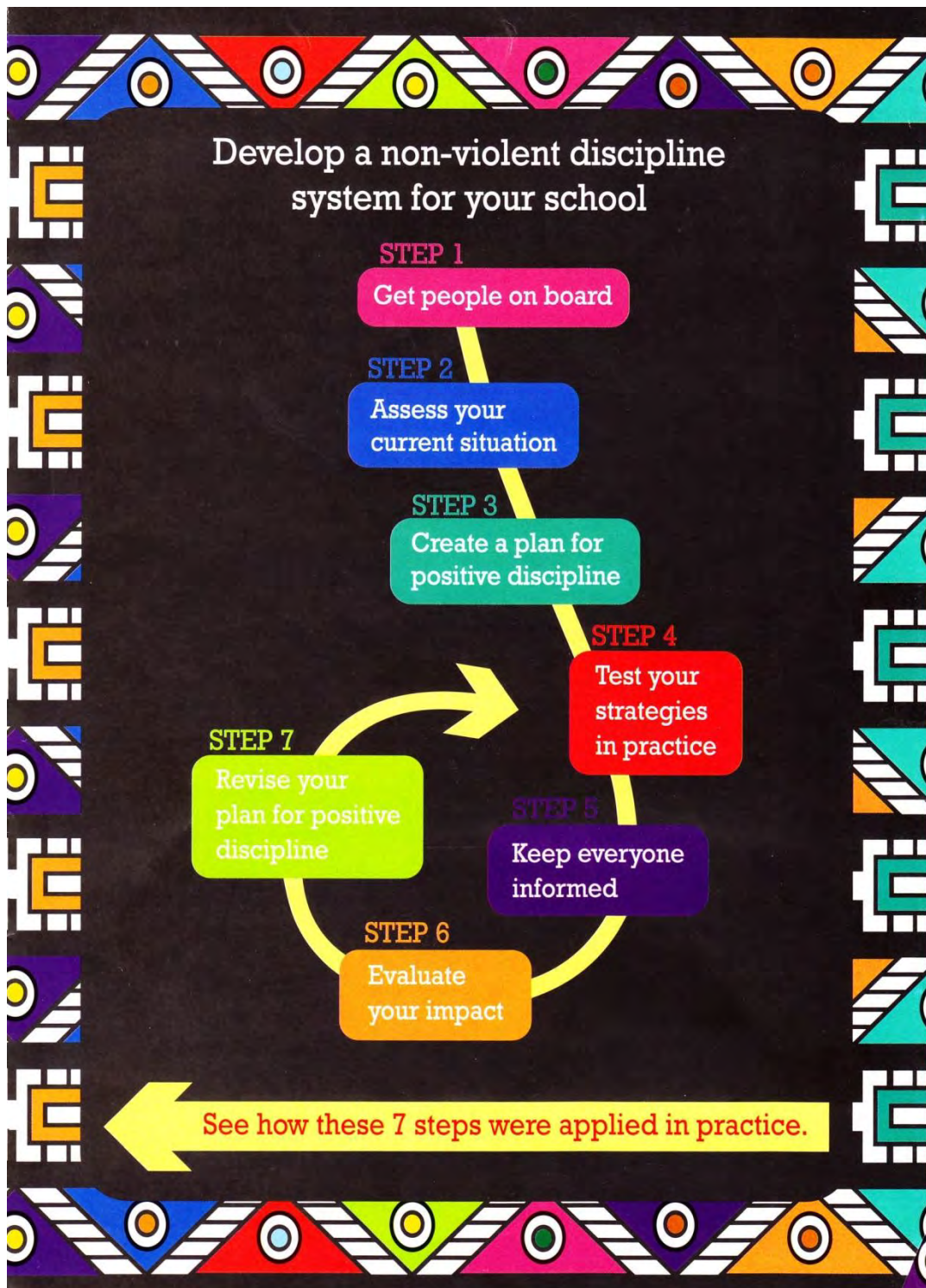
Assessor comment on:

Level of competence:	Expectations to be met on next visit:
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Final Rating:

NB: DoE instrument (2007) with creative licence amendments by U(i)(2009)

Appendix 2: The 7 steps to develop a non-violent discipline system for your school.



Appendix 3: Introduction to the *Example of a Code of Conduct for a School*

Introduction

This School is committed to providing an environment for the delivery of quality teaching and learning by:

- Promoting the rights and safety of all learners and teachers and parents.
- Ensuring learners' responsibility for their own actions and behaviours.
- Prohibiting all forms of unfair discrimination and intolerance.
- Eliminating disruptive and offensive conduct.

The Code of Conduct spells out the rules regarding learner behaviour at the School and describes the disciplinary system to be implemented by the School concerning transgressions by learners. The Code of Conduct applies to all learners while they are on the School premises or when they are away from the School representing it or attending a School function.

Section 8(4) of the SA Schools Act provides that all learners attending a School are bound by the Code of Conduct of that School. All learners attending the School are expected to sign a statement of commitment to the Code of Conduct (Annexure A). The administration of the Code of Conduct is the responsibility of the Disciplinary Committee of the School.

Appendix 4: Marking the Management Portfolio

Marking the Management Portfolio

The rating scale has been taken from the levels of applied competence in the ACE-SL implementation guidelines (DoE,2007). During a school visit consideration is made against evidence presented that reflects the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes demonstrated by the student on completion of the courses, assignments and implementation of the work-based projects. The student and assessor sign an agreement on the level awarded on completion of the visit.

Mark	Level	Descriptor
0-29%	1	Minimal: The level of achievement still does not meet the minimum expectation. Intervention is required.
30-49%	2	Rudimentary: The level of achievement is generally below par. Development is required.
50-54%	3	Fairly commendable: There is evidence that approximately half the maximum expectation has been met. Average achievement with room for further development and improvement.
55-59%	3.5	
60-69%	4	Superior: Achievement is above average but is yet to achieve excellence.
70-74%	4.5	
75-100%	5	Exceptional Achievement: Achievement exceeds all expectations. Ongoing development remains the goal.

The management portfolio weighting (%) determines the mark for each content item. Evidence must be indicative of development over the period of the ACE-SL programme with a specific focus on the implementation of the two work-based projects.

Content of Portfolio	Weighting
Work-based project reports	15% each = 30%
Work-based project evidence on core courses EDN4165W, EDN4166W, EDN4167W & EDN4168W	5% each = 20%
Reflective commentaries for work-based projects, core courses and learning goals (PPDP & ODP)	5% each = 35%
Personal, Professional & Organisational Development Plan for self and school after completion of ACE-SL programme, including long-term strategies for work-based projects	5%
Supportive documentation (Items not marked but must be in the portfolio see checklist)	5%
Technical aspects (layout, indexing, etc.)	5%
TOTAL	100%

Appendix 5: Interview with School Principal

Rose Primary: Interview with School Principal

Here is a list of the activities you indicated in your work-based project report assisted in the improvement of school discipline. Please circle which are still in place in your school.

1. Buy-in of staff
2. SGB support
3. Review and revision of code of conduct with all stakeholders
4. Grade 6 learners developed discipline plan
5. Formation of disciplinary committee
6. Class rules for teachers and learners
7. Regular meetings, discussions and information updates with all stakeholders
8. Learner line monitors introduced
9. Consistency on the wearing of school uniform
10. Specialist support on discipline strategies to staff
11. Teacher punctuality
12. Introduction of strategies to learners
13. Assembly to focus on values
14. Increased awareness of learners as to values of caring
15. Certificates awarded for acts of caring
16. School is declared a no bully zone
17. Counselling of bullies by social workers
18. Development of learner self-control

Questions

1. To what extent is each activity still in place?
2. Which have fallen away and why?
3. What activities were the most value-adding?
4. What activities were constraining?
5. Were there any unintended consequences?
6. What emanated from the project that contributed to continued school improvement?

7. What would you do differently if you had the opportunity to repeat the project again?
8. Did the fact you underwent a leadership and management programme contribute in any way to how things were done?

Appendix 6: Teachers' focus group interview questionnaire

Teachers' Focus Group Questionnaire

Key discussion question:

What do you think about discipline at the school

Trigger questions:

1. Do you remember the project on improving discipline at your school?
2. Has it been sustained or not?
3. What do you consider contributed/constrained this?
4. What were the driving factors to discipline change?
5. What was it about the context that assisted/inhibited change?
6. What has improved in your opinion?
7. What still needs to be done and why?

Appendix 7: Learners' focus group interview questionnaire

Learner's Focus Group Questionnaire

Key discussion questions:

What do you think about discipline in the school?

Has anything changed with respect to discipline at school?

Has this led to improvement in any way?

Trigger questions:

1. In the school in general?
2. In the classroom?
3. At break?
4. For infringements?

Appendix 8: Parents' questionnaire

Dear School Parent

RE: (NB: *name of institution removed*) RESEARCH STUDY

You have agreed to be a participant in a (*name of institution*) research study being conducted at your child's school in September 2012.

It comes at a time where there is much discussion around discipline as part of school improvement and it is intended that this research could offer a contribution to this debate and dialogue.

Attached: a letter of consent which you are required to sign and return with this document.

<i>Please give your opinion on the following</i>
<i>How would you describe discipline at the school?</i>
<i>Has anything changed with respect to discipline at the school over the past couple of years?</i>
<i>Has this led to improvement in any way that you have noticed?</i>
<i>Has your child had to be disciplined by the school? If so briefly comment</i>
<i>Additional comments relating to discipline</i>

Thanking-you for your contribution to this research.

Appendix 9: School Observation Schedule

ACE-SL RESEARCH: SCHOOL OBSERVATION SCHEDULE

(Used in conjunction with Field Observation Notes)

GENERAL

1. School:

1 Rose
2 Strelizia
3 Tulip
4 Daffodil
5 Gardenia

2. Date of observation:

3. Time (start) of observation:

A. The School Day

1. Use of time

Official School Day

Official Starting Time	Official Closing Time	Official Break Time	Length of Official School Day

Actual School Day

Actual Starting Time	Actual Closing Time	Actual break time	Length of Actual School Day

- a) Length of class periods (i.e. Structure of the learning day).
- b) Events which shorten the school day (e.g. sports, early closing, meetings).
Comment on regularity.
- c) Observation of classes (What learners/teachers are doing)

2. Attitudes towards attendance and time

- a) Comment on daily class registration practice.
- b) Comment on teacher behaviour towards different grade levels regarding attendance.
- c) Action taken regarding learners and teachers attendance.
- d) Overall impression on attitudes towards punctuality and use of time.

B. Class size and learner/teacher ratios

School:

Total number of teachers:

Total number of learners:

Ratio:

	Number of Pupils			Teacher	
	Male	Female	Total	Qualifications	Experience
Grade					

Comments on distribution of staff:

C. Observation of the school day

1. Arrival (Note: majority refers to 75%)

Statement	Early	On time	Late
1.The principal arrived ...			
2. The majority of teachers arrived...			
2.The majority of learners arrived ...			

2. Late coming

Mechanisms for monitoring late coming (*e.g.* The steps taken; if any, for late coming)

- a) Teachers
- b) Learners

3. Assembly

- a) Assembly conducted when and by whom
- b) School assembly venue
- c) Language used in assembly
- d) Issues addressed during assembly
- e) Behaviour of students during assembly (*e.g.* are they restless or attentive).

4. Time

- a) Time of first break
- b) Length of first break
- c) Time of second break
- d) Length of second break
- e) Total break time

5. Activities of the majority of the following people during break.

- a) Principal
- b) Teachers
- c) Learners

6. After-school activities

- a) Supervised study after school (Specify)
- b) Extra-mural activities taking place after school (Specify)

7. People who stay behind after school. Explain reason.

- a) Principal
- b) Teachers
- c) Learners

8. Utilisation of school premises beyond the closing period. Explain.

9. Other event/s taking place during the school day (e.g. staff meetings, parent meetings, visits from community members, disruptive actions, etc.).

10. Interpersonal Relationships:

- a) Management/Staff
- b) Staff/Staff
- c) Professional staff/ Support Staff
- d) Staff/Learners
- e) Learner/Learner

11. Comment on school culture/ethos

Observation schedule amended with permission from Dr J. Dornbrack, Schools Development Unit, University of Cape Town, 2012.